TRAVELLER

THE THIRD IMPERIUM

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

THE THIRD IMPERIUM

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INTRODUCTION

The Third Imperium is the primary empire of Charted Space, spread out over a vast region of space, consisting of all or part of 28 sectors, an empire of over 11,000 worlds inhabited by over 18 trillion sophonts of various human and alien races.

Many Travellers are familiar with the Spinward Marches and its neighbouring sectors, Deneb, the Trojan Reach and Reft. These sectors are on the frontier, located 'behind the Claw' of the Great Rift, a massive region devoid of stars that separates the domain from the heart of the Imperium. While the Marches are mostly Imperial territory, they are far from the Imperial core. Others may be familiar with the Solomani Rim, the origin sector of Humaniti. A little more than a century ago, the Imperium fought the greatest war in its 1,000-year history against the Solomani, conquering a quarter of its territory including Terra itself. In modern times, the Imperium remains in Solomani space as an occupying force.

Core sector, the seat of empire, is a far different place. These are the hallowed grounds where the Third Imperium was born from the ashes of the Long Night. The drama of Imperial history has played out in this storied sector and it has the scars to show for it. Core has endured dynastic crises, betrayals, assassinations, a civil war that nearly tore it apart and the agony of defeat in war. It has also experienced rebirth, survival, astrographic and economic growth, the ascendance of dozens of Emperors, technological advancement and the joy of victory over worthy foes. The crucible of time has burned away the utopian dreams of its first Emperor and yet his Imperium lives on. At its heart, the Imperium was intended to be a sprawling free-trade zone, its worlds free to chart their own fates within well-defended borders. This it has achieved. The Imperium has proven to be a worthy successor to the previous great empires.

The Imperium is an immense polity with a complex history. Within these pages, Referees and Travellers alike will find a detailed history of the Imperium and descriptions of its military forces, the feudal nobility who administer its worlds, the megacorporations that dominate its economy and other aspects of Imperial society. Also contained herein is a complete description of Core sector, the heart of the Imperium and the location of its grandiose capital. Core is a remarkably diverse and turbulent place where Travellers will find abundant opportunities for adventure.

Amid all of the history, world data and background information, there are new playable alien and minor human races, weapons and gear, vehicles and starships. All of these can be used to add colour and detail to any *Traveller* campaign.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

The Third Imperium is written primarily with the Referee in mind. All of the information contained herein can be used by the Referee to run an adventure or campaign anywhere in Imperial space but most especially Core sector. Most of its world, starship and equipment descriptions do not include spoilers that will ruin the

enjoyment of a gaming session for Travellers. However, it does contain some secrets, patron encounters and other elements, which the Referee might prefer to keep from the Travellers to enhance their enjoyment of the game. Nevertheless, the book does have volumes of information that Travellers might enjoy reading and allowing them to obtain this knowledge before a gaming session might enhance their experience and prevent the Referee from having to narrate the various bits of history, library data and other factoids. For Travellers who want to read *The Third Imperium*, most of the sections leading up to Core sector are safe territory. Avoid reading any patron encounters or NPC descriptions so that the Referee may use them. Most of the world descriptions in the Core sector section are safe to read as well but there are secrets and interesting facts sprinkled within those pages that Referees might want to surprise Travellers with. Consult the Referee before delving into the various subsector and world descriptions.

CONVENTIONS

This book uses a number of conventions that require explanation. The Third Imperium refers to the third great human empire, which has now lasted for over 1,000 years. Its predecessors were the Ziru Sirka and the Rule of Man, now nominally called the First and Second Imperiums, respectively. In the Vilani language, Ziru Sirka means Grand Empire of the Stars. This empire lasted for many thousands of years, predating Terran starflight by several millennia. The Rule of Man was its successor state, established by Terran conquerors who defeated the decaying Ziru Sirka during the Interstellar Wars. The Terrans and their progeny eventually came to call themselves Solomani, a name that invoked their star of origin but also reflected that after a few centuries they hailed from many worlds and were no longer just Terrans. The Third Imperium is often simply called the Imperium since it refers to the current human empire.

In *Traveller*, Humaniti consists of a broad panoply of subspecies. It is believed that an alien race known as the Ancients came to Terra approximately 300,000 years ago, took samples of *homo sapiens* and spread them throughout Charted Space. In some cases, these humans were genetically engineered to survive on alien worlds or to serve the Ancients in some capacity. In others, they were left to evolve on their own, subtly affected by the unique environments of their various worlds. The entirety of the human species and its myriad subspecies is called Humaniti. The Solomani, Vilani and Zhodani are the three human subspecies that developed jump drive technology independently, earning them Major Race status. Other human subspecies are Minor Races.

Charted Space refers to the interstellar region that is inhabited by Humaniti and hundreds of alien races. The entire region is, in fact, only a small portion of the Sagittarian Arm of the Milky Way galaxy. Vast expanses of uncharted and only recently explored space lie beyond its borders. Charted Space is divided into distinct regions and polities. The generally accepted measurement of space is the parsec, approximately 3.26 light years in distance. Astrocartographers have divided Charted Space into regions called sectors, which are 40 parsecs long by 32 parsecs wide. Sectors are subdivided into 16 subsectors, each of which encompass an area 10 parsecs long by eight wide. The entirety of Charted Space contains 128 sectors and over 80,000 stars, many of which are orbited by inhabited worlds. The Imperium later created subdivides of its territories called domains, each of which includes four sectors, but this was a political division, not an astrographic one.

Galactic directions are sometimes referenced in this book. There are four directions on maps of Charted Space. Coreward is in the direction of the galactic core or the top of the map. Rimward is in the direction of the galactic rim or the bottom of the map. Spinward indicates the direction in which the galaxy is spinning or the left of the map. Finally, trailing indicates the direction in which the spiral arm is extended or the right of the map.

While there are hundreds of alien races, there are only six that are considered to be Major Races. These are Humaniti, Aslan, Vargr, K'kree, Hivers and Droyne. Hundreds of Minor alien races, most of which have been gifted jump technology by the Major Races over the centuries, also travel the stars but none have large interstellar empires that measure up to those of the Major Races.

Each of the Major Races has its own dating system but this book uses that of Humaniti, specifically the Imperial Calendar. The Imperium measures time in years, which consist of 365 days of 24 hours each. The first day of the year is called Holiday and the remainder of the year is divided into seven-day weeks, whose days are called Wonday, Tuday, Thirday, Forday, Fiday, Sixday and Senday. The current year is 1105, the 1,105th year of the Third Imperium. Historical records referring to events that occurred before the Imperium was founded are shown as negative numbers. For example, Cleon I, the first Emperor of the Third Imperium, was born in the year -57.

IMPERIAL SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The Third Imperium covers a broad expanse of space that includes distinct regions, peoples and cultures. However, there are certain norms and standards consistent across Imperial space. The first of these is language. While many human and alien races speak their own native languages, Galanglic is the official language of the Imperium. Galanglic is descended from Terran English but has changed significantly in the millennia since Terrans first took to the stars.

The governments of Imperial worlds are independent. There is no uniform Imperial style of government or guidelines for how to govern a world. However, the Imperial bureaucracy is present on most of its worlds, run by the nobility. Nobles serve as Imperial administrators, collecting taxes, interfacing with other Imperial agencies such as the navy and scouts, and making sure that the worlds of the Imperium abide by its laws. Each world also has its own legal system; the laws of each world can be very different. Some worlds have highly codified, stringent legal systems on which it is quite easy for Travellers to run afoul of the law. Others have few or no laws at all. The Imperium does not impede upon the laws of its worlds unless they conflict with Imperial law. Imperial law is mostly vague, allowing the Emperor to alter it depending on circumstances but some Imperial laws are immutable.

The Imperial Credit, or simply the Credit, is the currency of the Imperium. There may be some instances in which barter or local currencies exist on various worlds but the currency of interstellar trade and commerce is the Credit.

The Imperium is a diverse and cosmopolitan place. It is home to two Major Races, dozens of Minor Races and to many individuals from among the other Major Races who have immigrated to the Imperium from their own polities. Generally speaking, the Imperium is a welcoming and accepting place for all of them. There are xenophobic cultures that might take issue with foreign humans or aliens on their worlds, usually backwaters and low-population worlds that see little interstellar traffic that are less accustomed to the diverse nature of the Imperium surrounding them. Even in the heart of the Imperium, pockets of such worlds exist. Likewise, Travellers might witness isolated acts of racism and intolerance here and there but overall the varied array of human and alien races are accepted as part of life in the Imperium. There is mutual respect and tolerance between most sophonts who see little difference between each other regardless of the fact that many Minor Races look and behave quite differently from the human majority.

Imperial culture is varied and its worlds can be quite different from one another, even those only a few parsecs apart. Religion, fashion, sport, entertainment and other aspects of culture differ from world-to-world. Imperial worlds do have some things in common: trade and the presence of the Imperial military and nobility. Each of these institutions imports ideas, styles of dress and cultural norms that are often mimicked by the societies of Imperial worlds, especially those more open to interstellar culture. Imperial culture is also defined by its contrasts with neighbouring human and alien polities. For example, the Zhodani embrace the use of psionics but they are anathema in the Imperium. Likewise, the stark differences seen in Aslan, Vargr and other alien cultures contrast with Imperial culture, more sharply defining it.

TRADE

Trade is the lifeblood of the Imperium. At its heart, the Third Imperium is a federation of worlds unified by free trade and open communication. The first Emperor established the empire based on the notion that free trade would enrich its citizens and bring civilisation to its worlds. The history of the Imperium has proved him right.

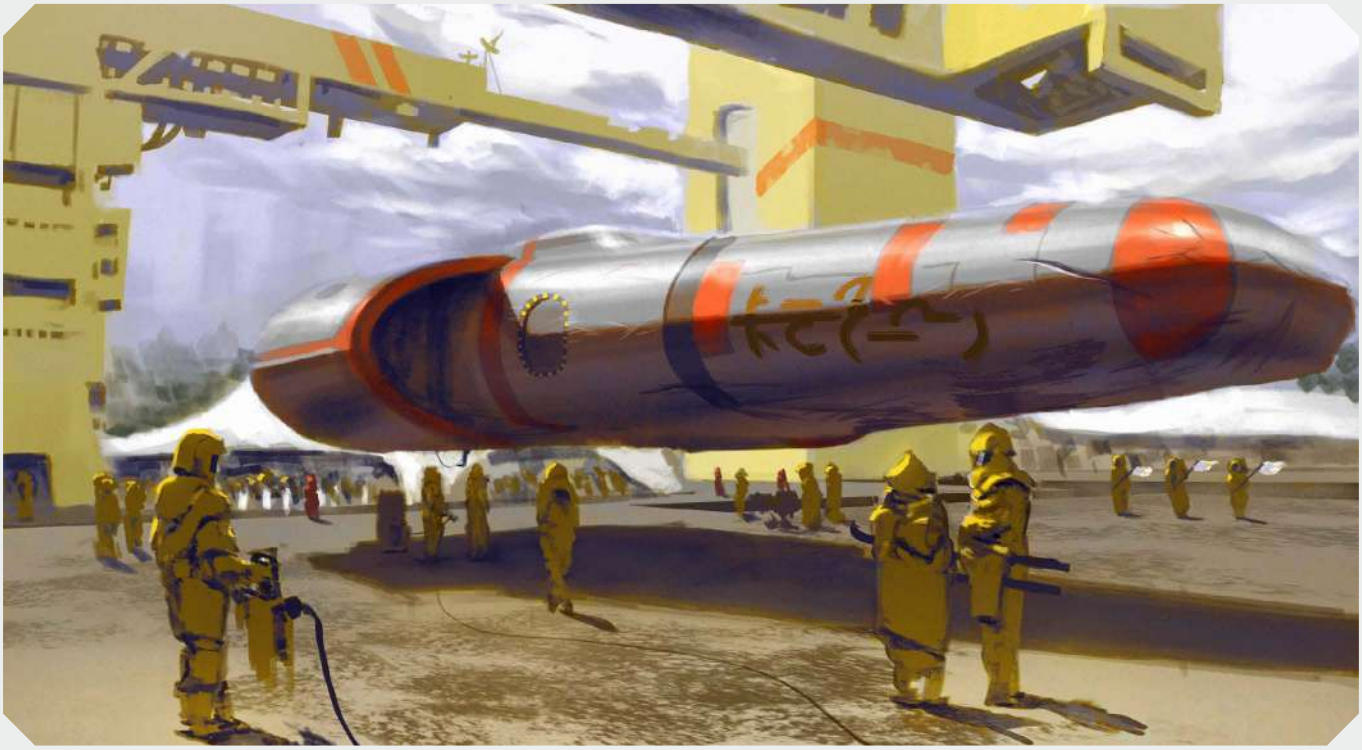
The majority of trade revenue is earned by megacorporate and sector-wide merchant lines that run freight operations along the major trade routes. These routes primarily serve worlds with high populations and other factors that give them importance. Trade goods are transported aboard megafreighters in the multi-10,000-ton range. However, the trade routes only serve 10 percent of Imperial worlds. The remaining 90 percent get their goods from subsector merchant lines, interface lines and tramp traders.

The tramp trader is the bottom rung of the food chain but operating such a ship is a romanticised enterprise. The captains of tramp traders are their own bosses, plying interstellar space in Type-A free traders or Type-A2 far traders, picking up small freight and mail lots when possible, carrying and serving passengers, and speculating on cargoes that may or may not be in demand at the next port. It is a difficult life, made more so by the constant need for an influx of Credits to pay the starship mortgage. Most of them would not have it any other way. Tramp traders do not have to leave the trade routes to do well. In spite of the fact that the big merchant lines gobble up most of the business, there is work to be had by small traders. There are many niche and underserved markets hidden away on the worlds of the trade routes. Most tramp traders spend time on the main routes and veer off them when profits beckon elsewhere.

Secondary routes and stellar clusters are also served by the tramp trader community but many of these attract mid-sized lines, which appoint subsidised merchant starships to serve them on an experimental basis. The most popular spacecraft for such trade missions is the 400-ton Type-R subsidised merchant, affectionately called the 'fat trader' or 'subby' by people in the business. If running a subsidised merchant reveals that profits are there to be had, an interface or subsector line will eventually invest in a secondary or cluster route, turning its worlds into regular stops.

Trade is not always solely motivated by immediate profits. In the early days of the Imperium, even when the distance travelled between worlds was too great for trade to be immediately profitable, technological exchange proved to be beneficial for both parties. Many of the early Imperial trade missions were run at a loss, with the intention of seeding the routes to distant worlds with outposts and colonies. By exporting technology to distant worlds, early traders gave them the means to start producing high-tech goods of their own. Eventually, such societies made technological advancements and learned to produce things that the worlds at the heart of the Imperium could use. As the populations and economies of the worlds in between began to rise and Imperial borders expanded, the distant worlds that the Imperium had invested in became valued trading partners.

An ancillary benefit of trade missions was cultural exchange. Visiting distant worlds enabled Imperial traders to establish common ground with peoples and cultures that had not been a part of interstellar society for centuries. The day would come when they would be asked to join the empire. The less foreign and alien the Imperium seemed, the more likely these worlds would be willing to become full-fledged members. Such missions are still undertaken along the frontiers of the Imperium, although there are far fewer unincorporated worlds in Charted Space in modern times.



The spirit of free trade on the frontiers lives on with the exploratory trade companies. Spinward Marches-based corporations like Barracai Technum and McClellan Factors operate armed *Leviathan*-class merchant cruisers in the backwaters and beyond their borders. These spacecraft are over 1,000 tons in size and designed to travel into potentially hazardous regions in order to establish contacts with new trading partners. Merchant cruisers have relatively small cargo holds, in which they carry wares from civilised space meant to serve as enticements to join the trade community. Frontier trade also attracts interest from the intelligence community. Merchants operating on the fringe garner the attention of various agencies that want information about what is happening beyond Imperial borders.

Developmental trade missions and burgeoning new routes are not limited to the frontiers. Old routes closer to the heart of the Imperium frequently die out and new ones take their place. It often depends on which of the big industrial worlds are producing the top products at a given time. When a middling or struggling industrial world suddenly makes a breakthrough, or just lucks into a market that becomes hot, traffic shifts to accommodate the trend. There are big profits to be made for merchants who read the tea leaves correctly and beat everyone else to new markets. The trends are always shifting and the most successful traders are those who catch the wave before their competitors see it coming.

TECHNOLOGY

The Imperium benefits from the highest technology in Charted Space. They are in rare company, having achieved TL15. Only the K'kree of the Two Thousand Worlds, Hive Federation and some polities of the Vargr Extents have matched this level of achievement. The Aslan Hierate, Zhodani Consulate and Solomani Confederation are standardised on a slightly lower Tech Level of 14. The single level of advantage is significant, with TL15 granting the ability to manufacture jump-6 drives, significantly more output from fusion power plants and many other innovations.

Imperial scientific agencies, the military and corporations are pushing the envelope to the next Tech Level. A few worlds have already achieved the next technological milestone. The industrial world of Vincennes in Deneb, the research station at Pashus also in Deneb and the tech-focused colony at Gannvair in Fornast have each risen to TL16. At this level, independent artificial intelligence, antimatter energy production, brain transplants, miniaturisation of previous technologies and resultant improvements in communications and weapons technologies become available.

Imperial culture embraces the judicious use of artificial intelligence to produce wondrous technologies and manage massive populations in the tens of billions. There are numerous safeguards in place to ensure the safety of this technology but innovation is always being pushed to the limit. At the Imperial Naval Base on Celetron, there are experiments under way to create the first fully autonomous starships. The Ye-lu system has taken it a step further by automating an entire world. The Saregon system has foregone traditional government and allowed an AI computer to govern billions of sophonts. The fear of unbridled technology persists but the pressure to remove constraints is strong.

While there is always a race to reach new heights of technology, the Imperium is a diverse society whose primary cultural influences come from the Vilani and Solomani. Dating back to the age of the Ziru Sirka, the Vilani have preached caution in the development and use of technology; meanwhile the Solomani have always emphasised continuous innovation and advancement. The two are at cross purposes but their divergent philosophies have found ways to coexist. Both Vland and Terra are at the Imperium's maximum Tech Level of 15. Despite the constant drumbeat of progress, the Imperium does exercise caution in key fields of research and development in an effort to keep technological development under control and prevent potentially dangerous technologies from proliferating across Imperial borders.

LAW

There are three types of law in Imperial space:

- Planetary law – Each world is empowered to author its own laws that establish everything from the enforcement of petty infractions to high crimes like murder, kidnapping, extortion and theft.
- Subsector law – The primary purpose of subsector law is to ensure that star systems do not exert undue oppression or cruelty upon one another. To an extensive degree, star systems are allowed to influence and control each other but when it impedes economic growth, threatens trade or opposes the interests of the Imperium, subsector-level authorities may intervene.

- Imperial law – Crimes such as treason, revolt, tax evasion and undue violence between worlds using weapons of mass destruction invokes Imperial law, enforced by Imperial military forces.

Few Imperial laws are codified, with most left deliberately vague. The Imperium is an immense polity with widespread and diverse populations. What works in the spinward region of the empire might not apply to trailing or for that matter between two worlds that are a few parsecs apart.

There is a significant grey area in Imperial law when it comes to the rules of war. Simply put, the Imperium allows belligerent forces to engage in war with one another provided they do not break the immutable Imperial laws, free trade is not impeded, and undue cruelty or oppression is not inflicted on one side or the other. Imperial law may also be invoked if a war between nations or worlds escalates and threatens to spread to a larger cluster of systems or an entire subsector. Other than that, war is considered to be a necessary outlet for aggression that should not be suppressed. Doing so can create an even worse situation in which a drawn-out cycle of terrorism, sabotage, assassination, insurrection and subterfuge create a long-term problem. While wars inevitably result in an unfortunate loss of life and a great deal of property damage, they can sometimes produce solutions in far less time with fewer casualties and a reduced negative effect on the local economy. The Imperium is quick to point out that this allowance is not an endorsement of war. Quite the opposite. The nobility does what it can to create diplomatic channels and mediation between opposed sides. Should a conflict escalate to war, it is not above the Imperium to pick sides. Assistance to one side or the other may sometimes be granted when it is deemed in the empire's best interests.

SOLOMANI AND VILANI

The majority of Imperial citizens are human and come from a variety of subspecies but the most prevalent are the Vilani and Solomani. The Vilani, who came from Vland, discovered jump drive technology thousands of years before Terra and built the largest interstellar empire in the history of Charted Space. Just as that empire began to falter, the Terrans aggressively came onto the scene and swept the Ziru Sirka away during the Interstellar Wars. Having become an interstellar people themselves, the descendants of the Terrans became known as the Solomani, meaning 'men of Sol'.

The Vilani and Solomani have slight physical differences despite having evolved on different worlds for hundreds of thousands of years but culturally they are quite different. Because of the challenges posed by living on a world that was not their own, the Vilani became a conservative people who favoured cautious resource management and tradition over unbridled innovation. Conversely, the Solomani were more aggressive, uninhibited in their advancement of science and technology. After the Solomani conquered the Ziru Sirka and declared the Rule of Man, the two human subspecies and their cultures became irrevocably intertwined.

After thousands of years of coexistence, Vilani and Solomani have found common ground. Social and physical intermixing has created a hybrid in which tenets of both cultures are present. The divisions between them are as evident as they have always been but they have learned to cooperate, leveraging advantages of both cultures to make a better Imperium. This is not to say that conflicts do not arise. Situations inevitably come up in which Vilani and Solomani values directly clash with one another. However, such occurrences are increasingly rare.

It is difficult to say which culture holds greater sway in modern times. The Vilani had thousands of years to perfect the art of building and maintaining an empire, while the Solomani had only a few brief centuries of experience before they inherited all of Vilani space. The Solomani had little inkling of what to do next after they won the Interstellar Wars. Solomani culture was thin gruel compared with the ancient and highly structured Vilani civilisation. The Rule of Man raped and looted the First Imperium but were ultimately made students of its conservative, empire-building ways. To paraphrase the ancient Terran poet, Horace, 'Captive Vland captured her rude conqueror'.

While the Vilani certainly knew a lot about empire building, the Solomani knew how to give an empire some teeth. Their embrace of technology and innovation enabled Humaniti to reach heretofore unseen levels of technological advancement and the security that it provides. As Humaniti began to encounter and conflict with the other Major Races, it is doubtful it could have survived with the arbitrary constraints placed upon technological development by the Vilani.

Despite all of this, there remain several forbidden realms of technology where the old Vilani caution creeps in. Foremost among these is artificial

intelligence. The war machines that were left on Vland by the Ancients, destructive automatons that posed an existential threat to humans, left their indelible mark on the culture. The Vilani were driven to reach beyond their world but also chastened by a history in which technology was a thing to be feared.

PSIONICS

The first widespread use of psionics was recorded during the Long Night, when isolated worlds and pocket empires validated the practice. Some worlds were even led by psions or governments that employed them in advisory roles.

The practice of psionics was mostly viewed as an oddity in the Third Imperium, despite their growing usage and acceptance during the first centuries of Imperial history. Psionic institutes and programmes at universities taught psionically talented individuals how to use their abilities to read minds, move matter and instantly teleport from place-to-place. These programmes reached a peak in popularity from about 650 to the mid-700s. However, a series of psionic scandals rocked the Imperium in the late 700s, resulting in the public turning upon psionics and those who used them. The Psionics Suppressions of the early 800s repressed the use of psionics and revoked the charters of nearly all psionic institutes. Psionics became illegal in Imperial space and practitioners were forced underground.

In the modern era, psionics are still illegal but two institutes remain in service, one on Wypoc in the Spinward Marches and the other on Terra. These institutes purportedly focus on the study of psionic phenomena to ensure the safety of Imperial citizens from external forces and foreign states that use them.

CULTURAL ZONES

The Warrant for the Restoration of the Imperium was published in Imperial year 0, claiming that all of the territory held by the Ziru Sirka and Rule of Man combined was the rightful domain of the Third Imperium. Using the Warrant for Restoration as its justification, the Imperium expanded its borders and consolidated its interior during the Pacification Campaigns.

The Third Imperium managed to integrate most of the worlds previously held by its predecessors. This was not accomplished without making sacrifices; inevitably, the Imperium encountered peoples and cultures reluctant to join. Circumstances dictated the methods by which they were coerced.

The Domain of Antares proved to be difficult to conquer during the Pacification Campaigns and the subsequent Julian War gained the Imperium no additional ground. Concessions had to be made to bring the region on board. A collection of worlds known as the League of Antares was established as a cultural region in order to placate the most resistant forces in the domain.

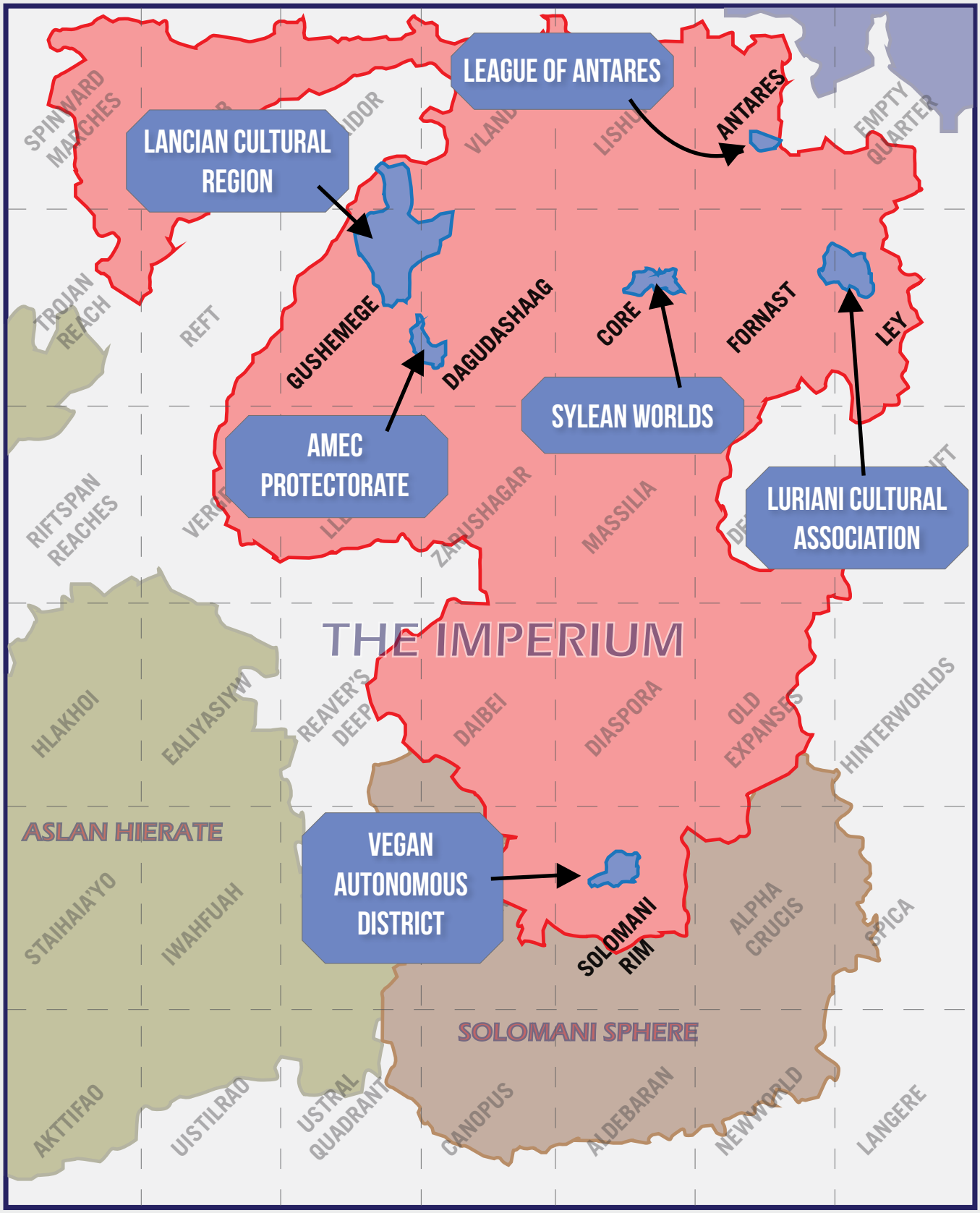
Likewise, in the far-flung Corridor, Gushemege and Dagudashaag sectors, the Lancian and Amec Protectorate cultural regions were granted to preserve distinct cultures that had developed during the nearly two millennia of the Long Night. The Luriani Cultural Association was similar. Of all the human Minor Races, the amphibious Luriani proved to be the most difficult to assimilate. The Imperium managed to bring them into the fold over time and granting them their own cultural region was a necessity.

Not all of the cultural regions were granted as concessions. Some were established to reward loyal service to the Imperium. The Vegan Autonomous District was given as a boon to the alien Vegans, whose aid to the Imperium was instrumental in its victory during the Solomani Rim War. The Sylean Worlds were established to honour the contributions of the Syleans, whose cultural principles and personal sacrifices were a crucial part of the foundation upon which the Imperium was built and maintained.

Additional cultural regions have been proposed for the Geonee, Suerrat, Darmine and Chanestin. Outliers in the Imperial nobility have even proposed the recruitment of polities such as the Darrian Confederation and Sword Worlds under the auspices of cultural region grants.

The problem with establishing too many cultural regions is that it eventually begs the question of why have an Imperium at all. The entirety of Imperial space could be subdivided into dozens, if not hundreds, of distinct cultural regions, each with their own laws, religions and traditions. In such a scenario, the Imperium would be reduced to a loose confederation of worlds. While some idealists dream of such a thing coming to pass, the astrographic implications are not kind. The Imperium is surrounded by the empires of Major Races and two great human polities: the Zhodani Consulate and Solomani Confederation. Were the Imperium to allow itself to be split into myriad cultural regions, it could become easy prey for its neighbours. The cultural region controversy is one of the defining issues of the modern age, one which Emperor Strephon and the Moot struggle with on a daily basis.

CULTURAL ZONES



INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

The Imperium has a complex array of relationships with the polities on and just beyond its borders. Treaties, armistices and pacts have guaranteed peace with most of its neighbours but there remains some enmity with some of them.

The Zhodani and their Outworld Coalitions have gone to war with the Imperium four times, the first of which began in 589 and the most recent one ending in 1084. In the interim between each war, relations with the Zhodani have been frigid. The Zhodani believe the Imperium is encroaching upon their borders and the Imperium distrusts the Zhodani due to their use of psionics. It is doubtful that the two sides will ever have an amicable relationship.

The Julian Protectorate has gone to war with the Imperium twice, once in the Julian War, which began in 175, and again over three centuries later in the Hidden War. Since its founding, the Imperium has laid claim to the sectors held by the Julian Protectorate based on the principles established in the Warrant for the Restoration of the Imperium. However, the confederated states of the Protectorate have no intention of joining, nor has the Imperium expressed any desire to reignite the flames of the only major war it has ever lost.

Perhaps the greatest threat to peace lies on the border with the Solomani Confederation. The majority of Solomani space was integrated into the Imperium centuries ago but relations declined and Empress Margaret I was forced to give the region its autonomy. The Solomani eventually declared full independence, calling their new state the Solomani Confederation. After a 12-year war, the two sides signed an armistice but not before the Imperium had driven a deep wedge into Solomani space, capturing Terra in the process. Even after over a century of peace, the Solomani are smouldering for a rematch but the powerful Imperium poses a daunting opponent.

The Imperium has a history of conflict with two of the Major Races – the Aslan and Vargr – and no major conflicts with the K'kree, Hivers or Droyne. Of the Major Races, the Imperium shares a border with only the Vargr Extents. There are comfortable buffer zones with the rest, most of which contain collections of independent polities.

The Aslan are an expansionist race united by a philosophy based on honour, which they call *fteir* in their native language of Trokh. During the Long Night, the Aslan and various human polities fought a series of Border Wars, which ended in the year 380 with the signing of the Peace of Ftahalr. Among its tenets, this treaty provides for a 30-parsec-wide gap between Imperial and Aslan space. While no major war has been fought between the two species since the treaty was signed, the two polities are now in close proximity to one another in the Trojan Reach. The Aslan continue to encroach into neutral territory and Imperial Navy forces in the region are preparing for the worst should a concerted invasion occur but the two remain peaceable with one another… for now.

The Imperium has a much more complicated relationship with the Vargr that dates back to the era before the Long Night. The Vargr were a major impediment to the coreward expansion of the Ziru Sirka; in fact, constant raiding by Vargr corsairs was a contributing factor to the fall of the First Imperium. They continued to be a problem for the Rule of Man. The Third Imperium has gone to war with various Vargr polities during the Pacification Campaigns, Julian War, Vargr Campaigns and all four Frontier Wars. Despite a long history of conflict between the two races, there are more Vargr Imperial citizens than any other alien Major Race.

The Imperium maintains relationships with its neighbours by exchanging embassies with them. The Imperium has no embassies in the Zhodani Consulate, Solomani Confederation nor the Julian Protectorate, but every other interstellar state on the periphery of the Imperium has at least one embassy. Ambassadors are typically selected from the ranks of honour nobles or the diplomatic corps, with a great deal of crossover between the two.

The Vargr and Aslan present unique challenges for the diplomatic corps. It would not be practical to send ambassadors to all of the myriad Vargr states, so only the most important ones are chosen. The Imperium is careful to select ambassadors who are seen as charismatic in the eyes of the Vargr. Ambassadors are often recalled when a state falters or subsides in importance, a common event in Vargr space. Fortunately, the Vargr accept boons and slights much better than most. The Vargr also have a greater innate respect for alien cultures. Plurality and variety in the Vargr Extents lends itself to easier acceptance of foreign societies.

The challenge posed by the easily offended Aslan is quite the opposite. The Imperium sends a separate ambassador to each of the 29 Tlaukhu clans, no matter where they rank in the Hierate. Additional embassies have been established in Aslan space on interface worlds and regions of importance.

While the Imperium has no embassy in Zhodani space, and nor do the Zhodani have one in the Imperium, both meet on Quar, a neutral Imperial client state located in the gap between the two polities, in the Cronor of the Spinward Marches.

Most Solomani worlds refuse to allow the Imperium an embassy on the grounds that they have never recognised the existence of the Solomani Confederation. The Imperium steadfastly refers to the region as either the Solomani Autonomous Region or the Solomani Sphere. However, the moderate Boötean Federation often holds summit meetings between the two sides on its capital at Hamilcar. Likewise, the Imperium has invited members of the Solomani Party and various factions from the Confederation to meet at the Imperial Centre of Peace and Diplomacy on Terra.

Imperial embassies focus on evangelising their core values: free trade, peaceable relations and the tenets of Imperial law. Cultural exchanges and political conferences are common occurrences. Embassies are also used for clandestine communication and espionage functions, although both sides either play down or deny this to be true.

Ultimately, the Imperium wants trading partners, not enemies. The empire was founded on the principles of free trade and the benefits derived from commerce between worlds. Conflict and war, especially on an interstellar scale, are expensive activities that the Imperium works hard to avoid. When war is required, the Imperial doctrine is to defeat enemy navies and occupy their worlds, suing for peace after victory is (hopefully) achieved. Overly destructive orbital bombardments and the use of weapons of mass destruction are generally avoided in modern times, although the Imperium has not outwardly prohibited such actions and maintains immense arsenals of nuclear, chemical and other destructive weapons.

INTERNAL RELATIONS

The Imperium is currently at peace, but it is impossible to keep 11,000 worlds happy all the time. Friction occurs between sectors of the Imperium, subsectors of each sector and often between worlds. In the latter case, squabbles can result in armed conflict, which are usually resolved by the parties involved without Imperial interference.

Internal conflicts are localised as best they can be. Armed conflicts between blocs of worlds or subsectors are forbidden; such things can easily get out of hand. The Imperium has suffered one major revolt, many minor revolts and one civil war over the course of its history and it acts quickly and decisively to ensure such things do not happen again.

Rival nobles have conflicts with one another from time to time but must be careful not to let things escalate lest a superior noble or even the Emperor becomes involved. Noble patents and fiefs are not distributed equitably, nor are worlds or lands granted under enfeoffment always equivalent in value or prestige. It is not uncommon for nobles to become envious of each other's fiefs. Conflicts are usually resolved through official channels, but some degree of skulduggery sometimes happens. Rival nobles are not permitted to declare war on one another, but they can and sometimes do manipulate the governments under their administrations into doing so. Noble conflicts can become personal, sometimes quite literally. The practice of duelling between individual nobles is frowned upon, but nonetheless occurs from time to time.

There are a few hot spots in the Imperium worthy of mention. The Domain of Deneb has always been a hotbed for conflict. The duchies of Deneb are highly contentious with one another and the Spinward Marches has always felt a bit neglected by Capital. To express their grievances, not one but two of its Grand Admirals travelled to Capital during the Civil War to claim the throne by force. The League of Antares has always had a strong independent streak. The region changed hands multiple times during the Pacification Campaigns and Julian War. Likewise, the Domain of Ilelish remains a troubled region where a widespread revolt once had to be put down.

Keeping the Imperium together is a constant challenge. While the Emperors and the Moot have done essentially what they set out to do – build a massive empire based on free trade and the defence of the space between its worlds – there are many more issues to deal with. Maintaining unity has always been the bane of the Emperor's role and he must be vigilant lest it slip from his grasp.

IMPERIAL MILITARY FORCES

The Imperial military consists of four services: the navy, marines, army and scout service. Each of the services has a distinct role in the defence and maintenance of the empire.

Many would argue that the Imperial Navy is the most important of the services. It is the glue that holds the Imperium together, responsible for the defence of its borders and the enforcement of Imperial law.

The marines are an adjunct to the navy, serving as its ship's troops. Starship battles alone do not always win wars. When the Imperium attacks terrestrial targets, the marines are its primary assault force the shock troops who descend from space to establish a landing zone for other military forces.

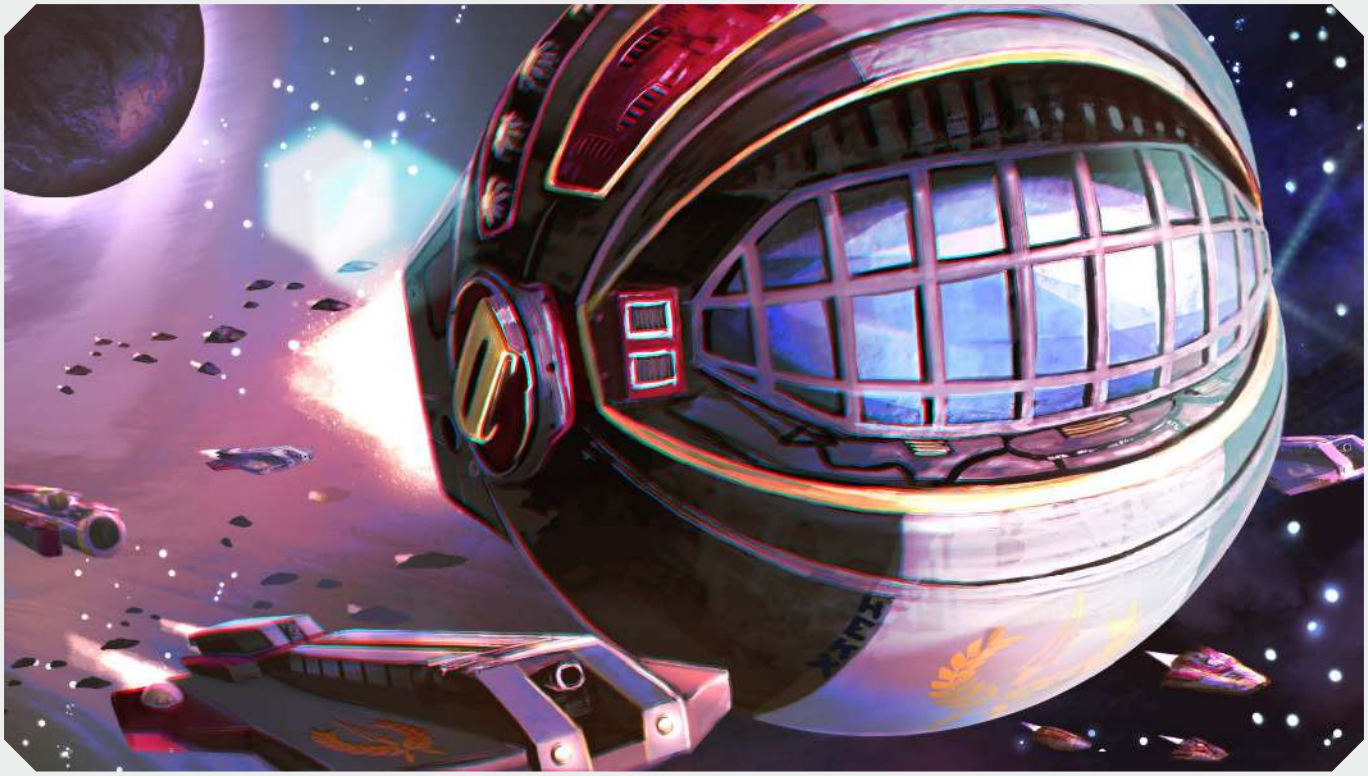
The army is the lifeblood of the Imperial military. Each world recruits its own army from the native population. When called upon, these planetary armies unite into a cohesive military force, and may be deployed to conquered planets where they restore order and keep the peace.

Without the scouts, the Imperium could not exist in its current form. The bold explorers of the Scout Service recontacted hundreds of isolated worlds and pocket empires during and after the Long Night, and paved the way for their integration into the Imperium. Today they continue to survey the Imperium's many member worlds, explore outside the Imperium to further its knowledge and maintain the communications links vital to maintaining the Imperium itself.

Each of the services are described in greater detail in the following sections.

IMPERIAL NAVY

The Imperium is a union of over 11,000 worlds. The sectors of the Imperium extend over far too wide an expanse for the government to exert centralised authority over its entirety. The Emperor primarily uses two tools to manage the empire: the nobility and the Imperial Navy. The feudal structure of the nobility is the administrative nervous system of the Imperium. The Imperial Navy patrols its borders and interior, enforces



Imperial law and ensures the secure flow of commerce between its worlds. In short, the navy's jobs are to defend the Imperium from external enemies, rid it of internal threats such as pirates and smugglers, and protect the worlds of the Imperium from each other when necessary.

The Imperial Navy is a vast interstellar military force with bases spread throughout Imperial space. Most sectors have a Naval Depot, a dedicated star system where the navy's starships are built and serviced. Generally speaking, the Imperial Navy reserves its larger ships – carriers, battleships, dreadnoughts and so forth – for the defence of a sector against external threats. The navy also maintains numbered and colonial fleets in most subsectors. Colonial fleets are smaller and usually composed of ships that would otherwise have been sent to the breaker yard. These fleets serve as a reserve and may be called upon to serve in a variety of capacities when the numbered fleets are otherwise engaged. Numbered fleets are also called subsector fleets. Subsectors are feudal subdivisions of Imperial sectors and subsector navies are to some degree instruments of the nobility that manage a given subsector. Numbered subsector navies give structure to the greater Imperial Navy and their ships are called upon to serve their respective sector fleets as needed. Subsector fleets are mostly composed of destroyer escorts, destroyers, cruisers and various auxiliary spacecraft. Subsector navies may have larger and older ships of the line in their service but typically only on a provisional or temporary basis from the parent Imperial Navy.

Planetary navies are significantly more diverse in nature and purpose. In principle, a planetary navy is any collection of spacecraft designated for the defence of a single world or star system. This includes system defence boats, fighters, armed traders and other spacecraft that the system has procured for its defence. The possession of a planetary navy is a function of technology and means. Simply put, planets with the necessary technology and a shipyard capable of producing spacecraft are more likely to have one. However, there are worlds of low technology with no shipyards that nevertheless manage to import a planetary navy. Generally speaking, systems of TL8+ and a starport of Class C or better have planetary navies and those below may import one with the means available to them.

SQUADRON AND FLEET ORGANISATION

The basic unit of the Imperial Navy is the squadron. There are 3–10 ships in a squadron. This number refers primarily to capital ships – destroyers, cruisers, carriers and battleships – auxiliary, support and scout spacecraft. Squadrons are organised into fleets, most of which comprise between 3–10 squadrons. Therefore, a typical fleet includes 50–100 starships. An average Imperial sector has 1,000 ships in its subsector fleets.

Imperial Navy Squadron Types

Squadron Type	Typical Composition	Mission
Assault Squadrons (AssaultRons)	Flagship: Cruiser Components: Tanker or dromedary, 3–4 troop and equipment transports, 2 scouts, various auxiliary spacecraft, 4 escorts	Take thousands of troops into battle and drop them upon the enemy in lift-infantry operations.
Battle Squadrons (BatRons)	Flagship: Battleship, dreadnought or battle tender (containing battle riders) Components: Tanker, 2 carriers, 3 battleships/dreadnoughts, 3 scouts, 2 auxiliaries	Meet enemy battleships and destroy them.
Cruiser Squadrons (CruRons)	Flagship: Cruiser or carrier Components: auxiliary, 4 cruisers, 2 scouts, 4 escorts	Support AssaultRons and BatRons by engaging in battle, providing cover for lift-infantry drops, supplying ordnance and taking on larger ships when necessary.
Scout Squadrons (ScoutRons)	Flagship: Scout cruiser Components: Auxiliaries and scouts	Reconnaissance, intelligence gathering, communication and exploration.
Tanker Squadrons (TankRons)	Flagship: Cruiser Components: 2 auxiliaries, 4 tankers, 4 scouts, 2 transports, 4 escorts	The unsung heroes of the fleet who keep the fleet moving by refuelling, resupplying and maintaining the ships of the line and doing whatever is necessary to keep the mission going.

The sector fleet is composed of the largest, most powerful ships – the heavy carriers, battle tenders, battleships and dreadnoughts.

The squadrons of the Imperial fleets are supported by thousands of auxiliary craft, including destroyers, destroyer escorts, close escorts, frigates, corvettes and many other specialised spacecraft. In peacetime, squadrons may be split into task forces or patrols in order to cover several worlds in a single star system but in wartime, squadrons rarely split up. They maintain tight formation in order to deliver the most powerful attacks possible.

NAVY BASES AND DEPOTS

The Imperial Navy maintains a system of bases and depots. Bases include repair and maintenance facilities, resupply stations, administrative offices and housing for personnel who are on shore duty, being transferred between ships or spending time in port while their ships are serviced. Generally speaking, planetside naval bases service ships of 1,000 tons or less while larger ships are seen only at orbital facilities. Navy bases are common in Imperial space, typically with several in each subsector on selected worlds with Class A or B starports.

Depots are allocated one per sector with two exceptions. Delphi sector has two and the Spinward Marches has none. Depots provide extensive repair and construction facilities and can service large portions of the fleet at any given time. Depots always feature Class A starports since shipyards must be present. Rarely restricted to a single world, most depots utilise multiple planets in a single star system. They are secure facilities and generally inhabited by naval personnel and civilian contractors only. New starship prototypes are often being built and tested at depots, so access is highly restricted. One must be a member of the navy or have special permission to enter a depot system. For a complete description of Core sector Depot, located in the Mekee subsector, see page 144.

IMPERIAL QUARANTINE AGENCY

The Quarantine Agency is a semi-autonomous force integrated into the Imperial Navy. Its primary role is to protect the empire from internal threats by quarantining worlds.

Early in Imperial history, the Quarantine Agency was an independent service with its own fleet of ships but it was eventually thought more cost-effective to make it a branch of the navy. At its height, the agency commanded approximately 10 percent of the navy's ships but that number has since dwindled. With increasing technology and automation, fleet elements can easily be annexed by the agency as needed and assigned to handle whatever mission needs to be done.

The Quarantine Agency was at one time more or less equally divided into military and administrative offices but in modern times the balance has shifted to the administrative side.

During the early centuries of Imperial history, the Quarantine Agency was involved in many operations that required the 'cleansing' of entire worlds. If a world was determined to be an existential threat to the empire, naval elements interdicted the affected planet and then bombarded it with capital ship armaments and large bolides if a planetoid belt or similar resources were present.

The Imperium has improved its ability to interdict worlds over the centuries and cleansing operations are now few and far between. However, the vigilant Quarantine Agency keeps a watchful eye on all of Imperial space and is always prepared to run a cleansing operation should one be deemed necessary.

QUARANTINE AGENCY TRAVELLERS

The Quarantine Agency has a parallel structure within the Imperial Navy with the same ranks, although the maximum achievable rank is commodore. Travellers can be created by simply having a career in the navy and declaring that their service was in the Quarantine Agency.

The agency has an administrative branch as well. Individuals who serve in the agency often spend time in both branches. Service in the administrative branch may be achieved by serving terms in the Citizen (corporate) or Noble (administrator) career. While the two branches are intertwined, their ranks are not interchangeable. When transferring from one branch to the other, the Traveller's rank returns to 0 in the new branch, effectively starting a new career.

DECKPLAN LEGEND:

DOOR

IRIS VALVE

AIRLOCK

LIFT

IRIS VALVE UP

IRIS VALVE DOWN

IRIS VALVE UP/DOWN

G/CHAIR

COMMON AREA

FRESHER

SHIP'S LOCKER

LOW BERTH

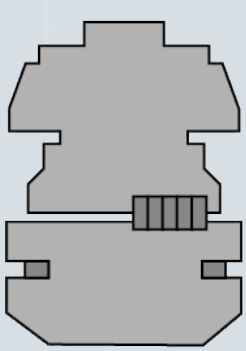
DRONES

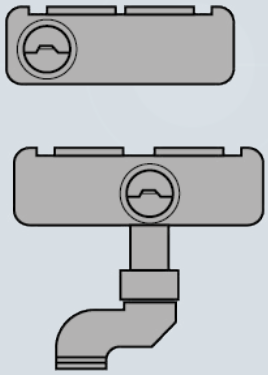
STATEROOM BEDS

AIR/RAFT

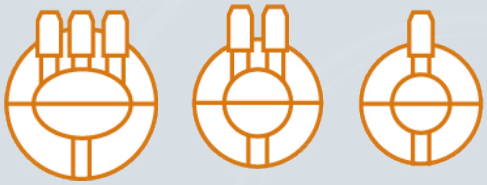
CARGO BAY

CARGO CRANE





POWER PLANT/JUMP DRIVE/ MANOEUVRE DRIVE/MACHINERY



TURRETS

HULL

FUEL

SPACECRAFT

BATTLESHIP

CLASS: Sylean

The *Sylean*-class battleship is one of the more common warships assigned to BatRons in the Imperial core. It is a hardy ship that punches above its weight class with its meson spinal mount and array of medium bay weaponry. *Syleans* are designed to serve as flagships and only have command bridges installed. Ships are named after Sylean worlds and famous Sylean citizens.

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	100,000 tons, Standard	—	5000
	Reinforced	—	2500
	Radiation Shielding	—	2500
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 10	8,000	6000
M-Drive	Thrust 6 (size reduction x3)	4,200	12600
J-Drive	Jump 4 (decreased fuel x2)	10,005	18759.375
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 95,000	4,750	9500
Fuel Tanks	J-4, 20 weeks of operation	32,375	—
Bridge	Command Bridge	80	750
	Holographic Controls	—	187.5
Computer	Core/80	—	95
Backup Computer	Core/70	—	80
Sensors	Advanced x2	10	10.6
	Distributed Arrays	10	10.6
	Enhanced Signal Processing	2	8
	Military Countermeasures Suite	15	28
Weapons	Spinal – Meson	7,500	2000
	Medium Fusion Gun Bays x50	5,000	800
	Medium Particle Beam Bays x100	10,000	4000
	Small Missile Bays x50	2,500	600
	Particle Barbettes x25	125	200
	Triple Turrets (long range beam lasers) x150	150	431.25
	Triple Turrets (accurate pulse lasers) x150	150	712.5
	Triple Turrets (sandcasters) x100	100	175
	Point Defence Batteries (type III) x10	200	200
Ammunition	Missile Storage (6,000 missiles)	500	—
	Sandcaster Barrel Storage (6,000 barrels)	300	—
Screens	Meson Screens x10	100	200
	Nuclear Dampers x10	100	100

Crew

Captain, Pilots x3, Astrogator, Engineers x542, Maintenance x200, Medics x19, Gunners x 1,305, Administrators x100, Officers x204, Marines x 50

Hull: 55,000

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

MCr5.729152/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr68749.821

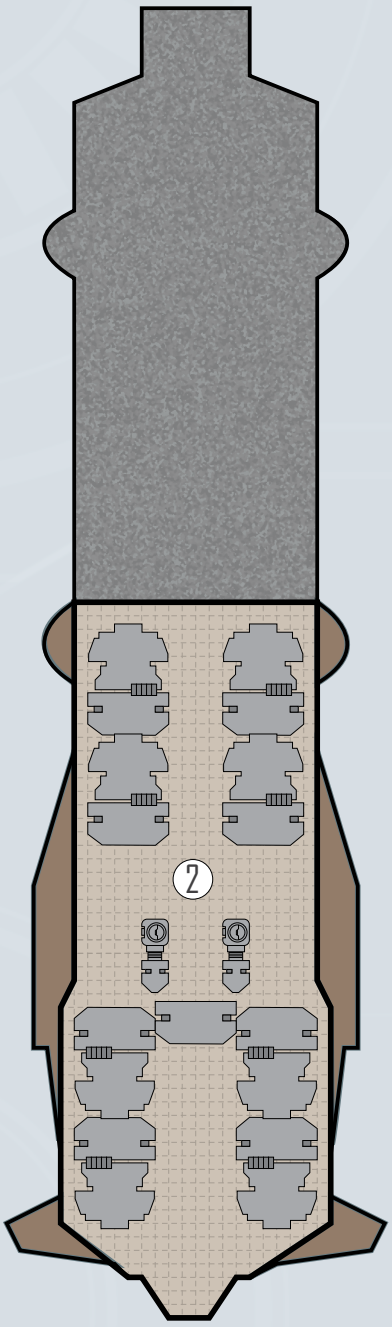
Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	20,000
Manoeuvre Drive	60,000
Jump Drive	40,000
Sensors	22
Weapons	14,475
Fuel Processor	900

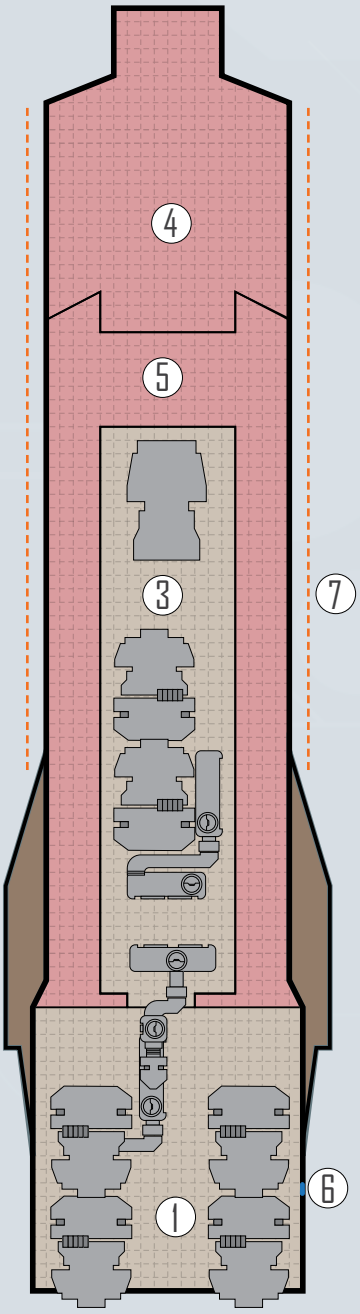
TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Systems	Fuel Processor (18,000 tons/day)	900	45
	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Armouries	20	5
	Briefing Rooms x4	16	2
	Docking Space (320 tons)	352	88
	Pinnace x8	—	69.696
	Medical Bay x18	72	36
	Repair Drones	1,000	200
	Workshops x3	18	2.7
Staterooms	Standard x1,300	5,200	650
	High x2	12	1.6
	Low Berths x100	50	5
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/4	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Advanced Fire Control/2	—	15
	Anti-Hijack/2	—	8
	Auto Repair/2	—	10
	Battle System/1	—	18
	Broad Spectrum EW	—	14
	Evade/1	—	1
Common Areas		1,300	130
Cargo		4,888	—

SYLEAN-CLASS BATTLESHIP

SYLEAN-CLASS BATTLESHIP



DECK 2



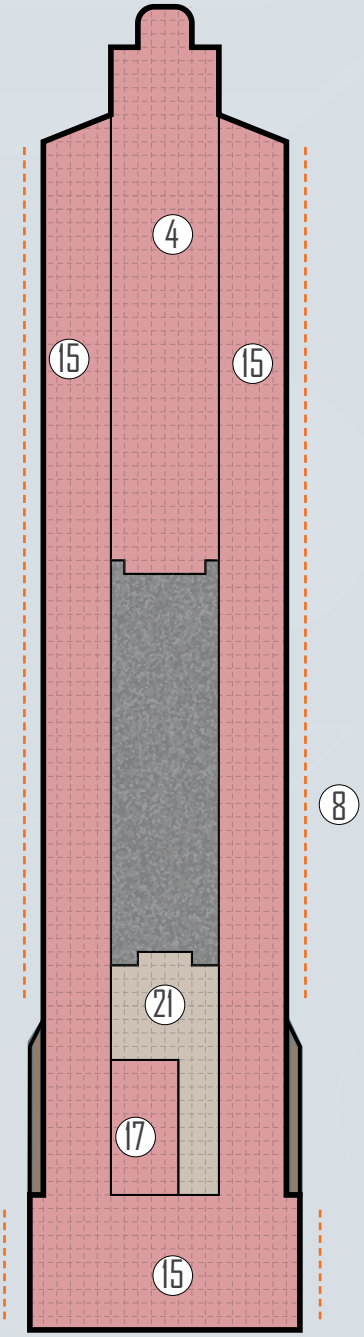
DECK 3

DECK 1 – FUEL DECK

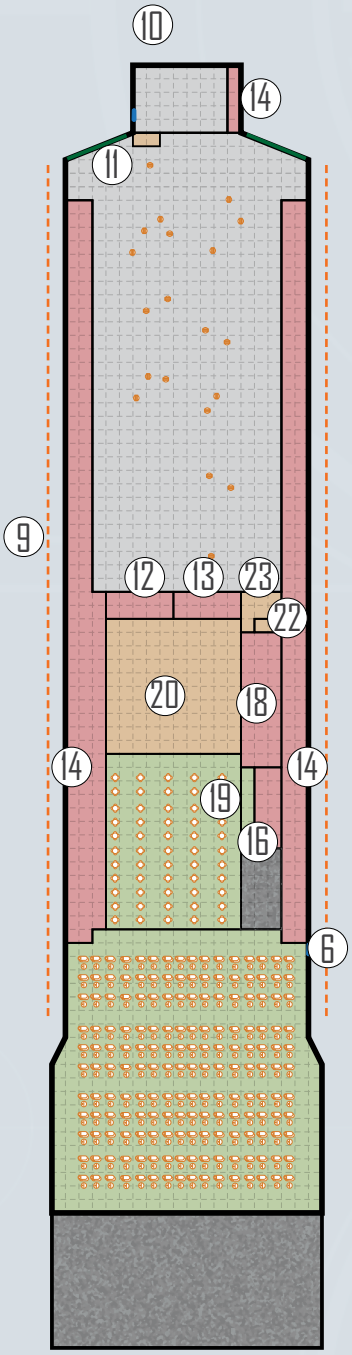
1. M–Drive
2. J–Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Spinal – Menson
5. Medium Fusion Gun Bays
6. Airlock
7. Triple Turrets (long range beam lasers)
8. Triple Turrets (accurate pulse lasers)
9. Triple Turrets (sandcasters)

1 SQUARE = 10 TONS

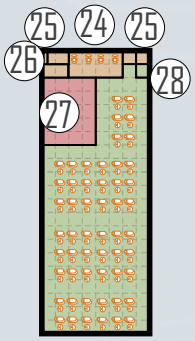
SYLEAN-CLASS BATTLESHIP



DECK 4



DECK 5



DECK 6

10. Docking Space
11. Workshop
12. Meson Screens
13. Nuclear Dampers
14. Small Missile Bays
15. Medium Particle Beam Bays
16. Particle Barbettes
17. Missile Storage
18. Sandcaster Barrel Storage
19. Low Berths
20. Repair Drones
21. Fuel Processor
22. Armouries
23. Medical Bay
24. Bridge
25. Sensors
26. Military Countermeasures Suite
27. Point Defence Batteries
28. High Staterooms

IMPERIAL MARINES

The Imperial Marines are the primary shipborne fighting force of the Imperium. The marines are steeped in tradition, having served admirably since year 0. Imperial Marines are instantly recognisable by their distinctive combat armour and battle dress. Likewise, their dress uniform with its maroon tunic, white trousers and shiny black boots tends to stand out in a crowd. Marines who have taken part in a jump (orbital assault) operation wear the drop slash, a small vertical piece of cloth on the back of the collar, black on field fatigues and red on the dress uniform tunic.

Historically, marines were an amphibious fighting force transported into combat zones by a wet navy. While star marines are not carried aboard ocean-going ships – although they can be, if necessary – Imperial Marine units are carried on most naval spacecraft. The purpose of a marine fighting force is essentially to finish the job when naval force alone cannot do so. The first stage of most wars is carried out between starships but even after one side has defeated the other, the losing side does not always surrender. Sometimes an orbital assault is required on a planet, asteroid or other terrestrial target to finish the job. Marines may be involved in both stages of such a conflict, first by raiding enemy spacecraft during a starship battle and second by serving as jump troops.

Raids are challenging. Taking an enemy starship, even one that has been disabled, can be a dangerous undertaking. Marine boarding parties stay in tight communication with each other and maintain precise spacing and coordination. Raiding marines arm themselves with a cutlass, snub pistol, accelerator rifle or laser carbine and a selection of appropriate hand grenades. ACRs, gauss rifles and other long guns are to be avoided since they are difficult to use in the tight confines of a starship. Raiding a starship is a leap into the great unknown. The crew might be prepared to surrender or might be armed to the teeth and intent on repelling boarders. Marines are always ready to fight their way into a ship but must also be prepared to fight their way back out if necessary. As a famous marine once said, ‘there’s no such thing as retreat but sometimes you can shoot in all directions’.

Jump troops drop from space with re-entry capsules, ablative shields, deployment shuttles or other means in order to spearhead an assault. For more information about re-entry capsules, see page 46 of *High Guard*. After a successful landing, the marines usually give way to the army, who come in to secure strategic targets and occupy worlds. In some cases, marines stay to help. As the saying goes, ‘All marines are riflemen’ and they are capable infantry.

Marines are organised in regiments of 3,500 for lift infantry deployments or Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs) of 2,000 for jump-troop operations. MEFs are austere units that include just enough support personnel to enable the unit to operate independently after a drop. The subordinate organisational structure is the same as the army, except that squads are called sections.

Powerful noble houses often maintain their own private marine corps, called lift infantry regiments. For more information on these, see Lift Infantry Regiments on page 32.

BRANCHES OF THE MARINES

The *Traveller Core Rulebook* includes three branch assignments for Travellers in the marines: support, star marine and ground assault.

Support includes quartermasters, combat engineers, medics, cavalry and staff. These are the marines who run the raids, manage the drops and run the command post during a lift operation. They are also the corpsmen, the combat medics who patch the infantry back up and ship them out or put them back into service. Marine units are accustomed to absorbing a high casualty rate. A qualified support team is the glue that keeps a regiment or MEF running after the attrition of war takes its toll. It should be noted that support staff are equally trained and capable of picking up a rifle and donning a suit of combat armour when called upon to do so.

Star marines and ground assault are two sides of the same coin: infantry. Star marines focus on raiding and other shipborne operations and ground assault focus on lift-infantry and jump-troop operations. To some extent, marines from both branches are interchangeable. They have similar skills and are trained on the same weapons and gear for the most part. However, where star marines rely on instinct, small arms and precise training regimens, ground assault marines are more skilled in the use of heavy weapons, military tactics and coordinating operations with naval transport or marine armour units.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE IMPERIAL MARINES

Running into the Imperial Marines usually means that the Travellers are somewhere they should not be. If marines are encountered, they may have either just completed a mission or are in the process of completing one. Being caught in the middle of a marine deployment can be dangerous. Marines performing a jump-troop operation are a sight to see. Should a group of Travellers find themselves on a world under siege, the sight of thousands of ground assault marines dropping from space could make for an exciting environment. However, once they hit the ground, the Travellers should make certain that they do not get caught between the marines and their target.

Travellers in possession of a starship may also encounter marines when they are subjected to an inspection. Most inspections are carried out by planetary navies, some of whom maintain their own marines. If the Travellers find themselves being boarded by Imperial Marines, it typically means they have found themselves in a critical location or situation. When visiting worlds that have key Imperial assets – for example, Capital, Reference or Depot – Travellers are likely to be subjected to an Imperial Marine inspection. The Travellers might also encounter the marines after inadvertently wandering into a star system that is on high alert. For example, the navy and marines may have been called upon to quell a revolt or interdict a world. Depending on the severity of the situation, all ships that visit the system might be inspected. In such a situation, the Travellers might want to make certain that they are not carrying anything in their cargo hold that could be construed as contraband.

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Patron: Sergeant Laon Kantil, Imperial Marines 103rd Provisional Expeditionary Force
Mission: After coming out of jump at the 100-diameter limit, the Travellers' ship is hailed by a naval cutter, which demands they stand down and prepare for boarding. The Travellers might be rattled by the aggressiveness of the orders they are given. The cutter docks with their ship and they are subjected to a thorough inspection by a section of Imperial Marines. After (hopefully) finding nothing amiss, marine Sergeant Kantil meets with the Travellers to extend his apologies. Their ship was identified on a list of possible smugglers; apparently, a criminal operation on a nearby world has found a way to 'spoof' transponder codes and has been using them to impersonate law-abiding starship crews. The sergeant informs the Travellers that there is a reward for any information that leads to the arrest of the criminals.
Reward: Cr100000 for information that leads to the capture of the culprits, the Travellers get to clear their names and they make a Contact of Sergeant Kantil.

IMPERIAL MARINE ASSAULT BATTLE DRESS

Imperial Marine battle dress maintains its distinctive look at all Tech Levels. The suit described here is the top-of-the-line model worn by most marines in the Core sector and other important regions of the Imperium. While it contains 20 slots for customisation, most of them are filled with the standard equipment shown here.

The armour is equipped with the TL15 electronics suite, which includes Computer /3, Eye Protection, Geiger Counter, IR Goggles, Light Intensifier Goggles, PRIS Binoculars, Radio Transceiver (5,000km range), and a Scope.

* Total cost of assault battledress with the standard gear is Cr764000.

ARMOUR TYPE	PROTECTION	TL	RAD	STR	DEX	SLOTS	KG	COST	REQUIRED SKILL
Imperial Marine Assault Battle Dress	+31	15	350	+8	+4	20	130	Cr360000*	Vacc Suit 1

The following gear is standard on the assault battle dress:

MODIFICATION	TL	SLOTS	COST
Advanced Life Support	13	2	Cr20000
Anti-Missile System	15	2	Cr125000
Camouflage	12	—	Cr5000
Enhanced Mobility (DEX +3)	14	1	Cr35000
Enhanced Strength (STR +3)	14	2	Cr25000
Fuel Cells	13	2	Cr1000
Grav Assist	15	1	Cr120000
Integrated Weapon Mount (rifle) x2	13	4	Cr2000
Prismatic Aerosol	13	2	Cr6000
Sensor Suite (+3)	15	2	Cr65000

The remaining two slots are typically left open for field modifications. Common uses are the installation of a second fuel cell or integrated tool kit.

DISPOSABLE RE-ENTRY KIT

Sometimes referred to as the 'poor man's escape pod', disposable re-entry kits are a suitable backup tool for jump troops who do not have access to a reentry capsule or other means of conducting an orbital assault. The kit consists of an ablative shield, harness, stabiliser tripod, lightweight chemical thrust adjuster and basic flight computer, all of which are disposable. The ablative shield is made of a polymer foam that absorbs heat during re-entry. At higher Tech Levels, the material becomes more durable and reliable. The flight computer is attached to the stabiliser and assists the user with adjustments during descent. The harness buckles the user in for the ride.

The user supplies their own vacc suit, combat armour, battle dress or other vacuum-sealed environment suit with a life support system. Users must make certain they have enough air in their tanks for the drop. The denser the atmosphere, the longer the duration of the descent.

Some kits include a parachute that deploys once a suitable atmosphere is present. Others require the user to bring an appropriate in-atmosphere locomotion system; for example, a chemical rocket pack or grav belt. Disposable re-entry kits are popular with extreme sports enthusiasts, some of whom hold drop competitions in which time to landing, landing zone accuracy and other factors are scored.

ITEM	TL	KG	REQUIRED SKILL	COST
Disposable re-entry kit	8	15	Flyer (any) 2	Cr15000
Disposable re-entry kit	10	11	Flyer (any) 1	Cr12000
Disposable re-entry kit	13	8	Flyer (any) 0	Cr10000

Making a drop with a portable re-entry kit: Difficult (10+) Flyer (any) check (variable timeframe, DEX). The timeframe varies with atmosphere type. If the Atmosphere code is 5 or below, it is 2D x 10 minutes; if 6–7, it is D3 hours; and if 8–9 it is D6 hours to complete the drop. The Referee may adjust the drop difficulty to account for other factors. For example, if the Traveller is dropping into a region in which a tropical storm is brewing, the in-atmosphere portion of the drop might warrant a higher level of difficulty.

IMPERIAL ARMY

The armies of the Imperium are much like planetary navies. Each world maintains its own army based on its population, available technology and individual needs. However, unlike planetary navies, armies are expected to contribute to the greater Imperial Army, sharing certain methodologies, technological standards, tactics and traditions.

Left to their own devices, the worlds of the Imperium do not always make the most logical decisions when it comes to building an army. Some worlds overbuild theirs and others underestimate the need for one, either fielding an army that ultimately proves to be insufficient or, in some cases, having no army at all. This environment produces a broad spectrum of military solutions. Some worlds with no army have an arrangement with one that does, thereby gaining a portion of its soldiers for their own defence. Others rely on mercenary forces. Some simply do without one, passively benefitting from 'herd immunity' by being among neighbours who have them.

The primary reason to have an army is to defend one's world, although many worlds, especially those far from Imperial borders, do not see the need for one in the civilised Imperium. This can be a mistake since the Imperium does allow limited conquest to occur between worlds. Those who have an army are not given any form of largesse by the Imperium. Other than the obvious security it provides, the benefits of having an army are ephemeral. A world with an army can be proud that it provides for its own defence and that of its subsector by contributing to the Imperial Army. Worlds endowed with armies have greater prestige simply because they have demonstrated the ability to create one. Such worlds are seen as valuable citizens of the Imperium who contribute to its defence and become de facto members of a martial community.

Worlds of the Imperium are likely to have armies composed of the units described in the Unit Organisation table. The larger the population of the world, the more likely the structure will resemble standard units. Smaller worlds (those with a Population code of 5 or less) may have less structure or they may have a militia instead. Militias may be organised in the same manner as traditional military units but not all of them are.

Unit Organisation

Unit	Description	Unit Commander
Fire Team	The fire team is the basic unit of the army and is exclusive to the infantry.	Corporal
Squad	Called a section by the marines, includes two or three fire teams (8–15 soldiers) and is exclusive to the infantry.	Sergeant
Platoon	Three or four squads (30–40 soldiers). May be commanded by a high-ranking NCO but usually by a lieutenant. The fourth squad of a platoon is usually a heavy or special weapons unit.	Second or First Lieutenant
Company	Three or four platoons (100–250 soldiers). Commanded by an officer with a high-ranking NCO. The fourth platoon of a company is usually a heavy or special weapons unit.	Captain
Battalion	Three to five companies (400-1,500 soldiers). Commanded by an officer with a small staff. Tanks and artillery are sometimes included. The basic unit of the Imperial Army. This unit and larger are outfitted for independent operation.	Major or Lt. Colonel
Regiment	Three or four battalions (1,500–4,000 soldiers). Commanded by an officer and staff. Tanks and artillery typically included. The basic unit of a subsector army.	Lt. Colonel or Colonel
Brigade	Several battalions or regiments. Brigades include officer staffs and usually contain significant cavalry and/or artillery elements.	Brigadier General
Division	Several regiments or brigades. Divisions are tasked with small- to medium-scale orbital assaults, planetary occupations and similar deployments.	Major General
Corps	Several divisions. Corps are tasked with large-scale assaults, planetary occupations and similar deployments.	Lt. General
Army	Several corps. An army and its command structure may be associated with a single world, a subsector or a sector. Planetary armies are interlocked via the joint structure of the Imperial Army.	General

BRANCHES OF THE ARMY

The *Traveller Core Rulebook* includes three branch assignments for Travellers in the army: infantry, cavalry and support.

Infantry are the ground pounders, the poor souls who endure the brunt of war more than any other branch. Historically, infantry soldiers are required to take and occupy enemy territory, often suffering horrific casualties in the process. This does not change at higher Tech Levels. What does change is the mode of transportation. At low Tech Levels, infantry are expected to walk from place to place, sometimes alongside armoured vehicles once TL4–7 is reached. At TL6–8, infantry are transported in trucks, armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and other vehicles, but ultimately they find themselves in the same place; out in the open, hopefully in a foxhole with a rifle in hand, defending whatever territory their army has taken. At higher Tech Levels, gravitic transportation becomes available. At TL8–9, half of all vehicles are likely to be gravitic. By TL10+, gravitic APCs are standard and become better armed and armoured as technology advances.

Personal armour improves with technology as well. At lower Tech Levels, infantry soldiers will be unarmoured or at best lightly armoured. By TL8, more effective armour, weaponry and communications devices become available. At TL10+, combat armour becomes available for commandos and other specialised troops and at TL12+ it becomes standard for most infantry.

Weaponry also varies with Tech Level. The standard TL12 infantry soldier is armed with a gauss rifle, a sidearm and an appropriate selection of grenades. At least one fire team in each squad or platoon is equipped with heavy weaponry, usually a tripod-mounted machine gun or VRF gauss weapon but alternatives are available.

Two subsets of infantry are lift infantry and jump troops. Lift infantry are soldiers in gravitic vehicles. Jump troops are dropped from orbit in specialised pods or with the aid of an ablative shield to plunge safely through atmosphere. Once on the ground, they are the vanguard of a larger assault force and often dropped in zones where they are to eliminate strategic targets or secure landing zones for the remainder of the army. Lift infantry are typically equipped with combat armour and light weaponry. Jump troops in the army are special forces as opposed to the marines, all of whom are trained for such operations. Notably, jump-trained army units post ‘drop wings’ on their uniforms while marines retain a space for wings but do not post them since all marines are jump troops.

For a selection of armour and weaponry used by the army, refer to the *Central Supply Catalogue* and the *Field Catalogue*.

Cavalry on low-tech worlds are animal-mounted troops, riding horses, kians or other effective warsteeds. However, when in reference to the high-tech Imperial Army, cavalry refers specifically to soldiers who fight in fast, cross-country vehicles. At low- to mid-tech, cavalry operate small vehicles, trucks, halftracks, APCs and tanks. At higher Tech Levels, gravitic vehicles become standard. At the upper end of a cavalry unit are the tankers who operate armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs), armed with a deadly array of weaponry designed to kill infantry and destroy other vehicles and tanks.

Support roles are many and varied in a high-tech army, including artillery, combat engineers, medics and staff. Artillery are trained in the use of the army’s field weapons. At low- to mid-Tech Levels, artillery is composed of large-calibre slug-throwing weapons that fire explosive munitions. As Tech Levels increase, artillery includes multiple rocket launchers (MRLs) and energy weapons that inflict massive amounts of damage

to enemy structures and personnel alike. Artillery is often referred to as simply 'the killer' for its astounding ability to suppress mobility and inflict casualties.

BUILDING IMPERIAL ARMY UNITS

The concept of an empire-wide army did not take hold until the advent of the Third Imperium. The Sylean Federation had no unified army to speak of, instead allowing each of its worlds to raise its own army independently. While the Syleans did occupy worlds, notably during their war with the Interstellar Confederacy, individual armies were placed under the joint control of the president and Grand Senate of Sylea. Likewise, the Rule of Man applied a haphazard strategy, using armies from hundreds of worlds to pacify and occupy the worlds that it conquered from the Ziru Sirka. These methods were examined by the Third Imperium from a historical perspective and each was found lacking.

The Imperium intended to become a far greater and more expansive empire than its predecessors. If the Warrant for the Restoration of the Imperium was to be realised – which claimed possession of all worlds held by the previous human empires – then a more unified structure would be needed. Cleon Zhunastu believed that free trade and defence of the space between its worlds would be the glue that held the Imperium together. Despite his objection to the use of force to coerce worlds into accepting Imperial membership, he realised that an Imperial Army would be required. Not every world in Charted Space could be expected to accept the Imperium's offer and there would come a day when it would be unacceptable, even dangerous, to have islands of independence in the midst of the empire. Furthermore, once the Imperium was established, revolts and insurrections would inevitably have to be put down from time-to-time.

In many ways, the Sylean model was merely improved upon. Individual worlds are still encouraged to raise their own armies but the joint-command structure at Capital, and subordinate commands in each sector and subsector, have a much more active role in the maintenance, standardisation and training of planetary armies. Imperial Army units are configured at the subsector level. Individual worlds provide regiments that are organised into divisions during deployments and, if necessary, subsector divisions can be further organised into corps and whole armies if a larger deployment is necessary. Subsector-level Imperial Army units have been mobilised many times, usually to put down revolts or fight small wars. Sector-wide corps have only been organised into an army on one occasion: the Solomani Rim War.

The armies of individual worlds are organised within the Imperial Army as either attached or contributed formations. Attached formations are armies that do not regularly train with those of other worlds. As such, they may have distinctive tactics, cultures, uniforms, equipment and Tech Levels. When integrated into an Imperial Army division, attached formations are generally segregated from units that are built from contributed formations. Likewise, attached formations are given suitable assignments for units that do not regularly 'play for the team'. Contributed formations regularly train with one another and have an array of standards that make it easy to mix and match troops from multiple worlds into a cohesive subsector or sector army.

Configuring subsector Imperial Army divisions has its challenges. While some worlds have armies that are large enough to handle an interstellar deployment on their own, this practice is frowned upon. Allowing the army of a single world to occupy another sends the wrong message, even when putting down a revolt. Furthermore, armies are effectively subcultures of worlds. As such, each has a unique persona and characteristics. Deploying the army of one world

MESON REBELLION

A recent example of an interstellar deployment was the Meson Rebellion in 1032 on Khikaba in Lishun. After Imperial Navy squadrons secured the system and Imperial Marine lift infantry secured a landing zone, an Imperial Army division, composed of regiments from Biaz Ven, Iksha and Surli, was deployed to the system mainworld to secure it. The garrison remains on Khikaba to this day and each of the regiments involved rotates troops into and out of the operational theatre. Counterinsurgency personnel were brought in to perform inspections of various sites and ensure that no items of TL9+ reach the planet. In the case of this deployment, the regiment from low-tech Surli were trained in the use of TL12 weapons, the standard for the deployment.

to another can result in a clash of cultures. For this reason, most Imperial Army deployments are composed of contributed formations from several worlds, transforming them into members of the homogenised Imperial Army.

Clashing cultures are not the only factors to contend with when assembling a subsector army out of contributed formations. The Imperium has a broad range of population and Tech Levels. There are high-tech worlds with large populations, low-tech worlds with medium populations, mid-tech worlds with middling populations and every other combination in between. The Tech Level differences between armies can be significant. In the Core sector alone, there are massive disparities. For example, the high-population world of Shiirand has an army of 34 million soldiers, all of whom use TL7 equipment. Meanwhile, three parsecs away, the army of Ushra has 105 million soldiers armed to a much higher TL12 standard. The Imperium mitigates this imbalance with joint training exercises. Several battalions of Shiirand's army are regularly deployed to Ushra to train with weapons and vehicles of higher technology. Likewise, soldiers in Ushra's army might be rotated to TL14 Alekvadin to learn how to use man-portable fusion weapons in a separate cross-training programme. It is not cost-effective for every soldier in a multi-million-sophont army to be shipped out to multiple worlds over the course of a military career. To help remedy this situation, soldiers who have been trained on weapons, vehicles and gear from higher-tech worlds are usually assigned the task of training their own soldiers in the use of the same equipment. Ultimately, a lower-tech army returns to its standard equipment but chances are that most of the soldiers in a subsector army have been exposed to high-tech gear at some point during their careers. Therefore, when called upon to serve in an interstellar deployment, the soldiers of any world's army are generally proficient at the technological standard that is provided.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE IMPERIAL ARMY

The Imperial Army is almost everywhere in the Imperium. Use a world's Universal World Profile as a guide with the following caveats. Note that this applies strictly to worlds within the boundaries of the Imperium.

Population	Imperial Army Presence
4 or below	No independent army unless Government code is 6 (see below). A militia may be present or the world might be defended by a detachment from a nearby world that has a higher population.
5	Militia or Imperial Army present. Worlds with Population 5 are on the dividing line. Some will have a large militia and others a small army. If the world has an army, it may be part of the Imperial Army.
6 or higher	Imperial Army present. If Government code is 6, the world may have a captive government or military rule.

Government	Imperial Army Presence
6	If the world is a colony, it may have no military at all, or might have a militia or Imperial Army unit present. If the world has a captive government or military rule, the Imperial Army or an army of a neighbouring world occupies the world.
7	Balkanised worlds are variable. Some have nation states at odds with each other may have a larger military presence than is normal. Others are peaceable and do not have an elevated military presence. In either case, balkanised worlds with Population 6+ are expected to contribute forces to the Imperial Army at the subsector level as normal.
A or higher	More complex forms of government are often bolstered by or require the presence of a larger military. Oligarchies, dictatorships and autocracies are usually enforced by a large army.

Law Level	Imperial Army Presence
9 or below	Standard Imperial Army presence.
A or higher	Higher Law Levels may indicate the presence of a larger, more invasive army. However, a high Law Level almost certainly indicates the presence of a larger, more intrusive police force. In some cases, the two go hand-in-hand.

Soldiers of the Imperial Army are a common sight on many Imperial worlds but are most visible on worlds with Population 5+, Government 6 or A and higher and a Law Level of A or higher. Worlds with Government 6 are governed by a colony, captive government or military rule. A colony world is likely to have a militia but a world with a captive government or military rule often has an occupying army present. In some cases, a high-ranking officer in the Imperial Army is the military governor of the world, although the role may be held by an officer of the Imperial Navy or an appointed civilian administrator who serves as a proxy for the military. A world under military rule is sometimes governed by a nearby star system, which may install a local representative to administer it.

Worlds with other government types may also have offworld Imperial Army units present. A captive government is not required. Sometimes it is deemed expedient to delegate defence to a more willing and capable partner. For example, Duuka in Core is an agricultural world with a population of 600,000. The world has no military of its own but has a small Imperial Army presence from nearby Mish, a high-population, industrialised world that relies upon Duuka for foodstuffs and other agricultural products.

A LITTLE PIECE OF HOME

Patron: Captain Qilaria Odom, Requisitions Officer, 467th Infantry.

Mission: The garrison at Adkhi/Core has been present for decades, quelling an insurgency from Chanestin separatists. The 467th is composed of three regiments out of the Saregon subsector. The regiments hail from Arvlaa Gam, Gaen Luum and Khuir. Due to high-priority police actions on Igla and Shakiiga, the garrison on Adkhi has had its tour extended and the troops are getting restless. Captain Odom wants to boost their morale by giving them a little taste of home. Military budgets are tight but Odom has been given a reasonable discretionary fund to acquire foods, entertainment products and other goods from each of the regiment's homeworlds. The Travellers are hired to pick up 30 tons of freight and an additional 20 tons of goods (the portions from each world to be determined by the Referee) that will give these homesick soldiers something to be excited about. The 20 tons of speculative cargo is at the discretion of the Travellers but should reflect the unique cultures of each world.

Reward: Standard freight fees and speculative cargo revenue plus future contracts with the army if the goods are well received by the troops.

INVADER LIGHT GRAV TANK

The *Invader*, built by Ling Standard Products, is the standard battle tank on most worlds of TL14 or higher. The tank has a crew of four including a commander, driver and two gunners.

TL	14
SKILL	Flyer (grav)
AGILITY	+1
SPEED (CRUISE)	High (Medium)
RANGE (CRUISE)	100 years
CREW	4
PASSENGERS	—
CARGO	—
HULL	120
SHIPPING	30 TONS
COST	MCr35.44

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Anti-Missile System (advanced laser), Autopilot (enhanced), Bunks, Camouflage (advanced), Communications System (advanced, encrypted, satellite uplink, tightbeam), Computer/5, ECM (advanced), Control system (enhanced), Fire Extinguishers, Fusion Plant (advanced), Life Support (short term), Navigation System (advanced), Prismatic Aerosol, Reactive Armour (advanced), Large Turret (fusion gun-Y), Small Turret (gauss cannon), Vacuum Protection

TRAITS

AFV, Streamlined

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	2
Communications (range)	1,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+4
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+2
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-4
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-4

ARMOUR

FRONT	120 (+30)	REAR	65 (+30)	SIDES	112 (+30)

WEAPONS	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE	MAGAZINE COST	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
Fusion Gun-Y	5	3DD	—	—	AP 20, Blast 20, Radiation	+4
Gauss Cannon	2	1DD	200	Cr1000	AP 10, Auto 3	+4

TREPIDA GRAV TANK

Currently available as a prototype, the *Trepida* is intended to become the standard-issue heavy grav tank in the Imperium. The *Trepida* is in trials at the moment and has been deployed on Capital and other key worlds of the Core sector. The tank has a crew of two, a commander and driver/gunner.

TL	15
SKILL	Flyer (grav)
AGILITY	+1
SPEED (CRUISE)	Fast (High)
RANGE (CRUISE)	100 years
CREW	2
PASSENGERS	—
CARGO	—
HULL	96
SHIPPING	24 tons
COST	MCr31.64

EQUIPMENT

Autopilot (skill level)	2
Communications (range)	1,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+4
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+2
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-4
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-4

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Anti-Missile System (advanced laser), Autopilot (enhanced), Bunks, Camouflage (advanced), Communications System (advanced, encrypted, satellite uplink, tightbeam), Computer/5, ECM (advanced), Control system (enhanced), Fire Extinguishers, Fusion Plant (advanced), Life Support (short term), Navigation System (advanced), Prismatic Aerosol, Reactive Armour (advanced), Large Turret (Fusion-RFY gun), Vacuum Protection

TRAITS

AFV, Streamlined

ARMOUR

FRONT	130 (+30)	REAR	72 (+30)	SIDES	110 (+30)

WEAPON	RANGE	DAMAGE	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
Fusion Gun-RFY	5	3DD	AP 15, Auto 2, Blast 10, Radiation	+4

Rapid-Fire Fusion Guns: The *Trepida* and other classes of Imperial battle tank use a rapid-fire fusion gun instead of the standard fusion gun installed on its predecessor, the *Invader*. Rapid-fire fusion weapons become available at TL14, are designated with the prefix 'RF' and preclude the need for an auxiliary automatic weapon.

WEAPON	TL	RANGE	DAMAGE	TONS	SPACES	COST	TRAITS
Fusion Gun-RFX	14	5	3DD	4	16	MCr3	AP 10, Auto 2, Blast 5, Radiation
Fusion Gun-RFY	15	5	3DD	4	16	MCr8	AP 15, Auto 2, Blast 10, Radiation
Fusion Gun-RFZ	16	5	3DD	4	16	MCr10	AP 20, Auto 3, Blast 15, Radiation

ASTRIN GRAV APC

The *Astrin* is the latest in the line of grav troop carriers intended to accompany the *Trepida* into battle. The APC has a crew of two, a driver and gunner, and seats 12 armed and armoured soldiers.

TL	14
SKILL	Flyer (grav)
AGILITY	+1
SPEED (CRUISE)	Fast (High)
RANGE (CRUISE)	100 years
CREW	2
PASSENGERS	12
CARGO	0.3 tons
HULL	80
SHIPPING	20 tons
COST	MCr20.25

ARMOUR

FRONT	100	REAR	70	SIDES	100

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Autopilot (enhanced), Camouflage (advanced), Communications System (advanced, encrypted, satellite uplink, tightbeam), Computer/5, ECM (advanced), Control system (enhanced), Fire Extinguishers, Fusion Plant (advanced), Life Support (short term), Navigation System (advanced), Prismatic Aerosol, Small Turret (VRF gauss gun)

TRAITS

AFV, Streamlined

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	2
Communications (range)	1,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+4
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+2
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-4
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-4

WEAPON	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE	MAGAZINE COST	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
VRF Gauss Gun	750	4D	400	Cr1000	AP5, Auto 8	+4

LIFT INFANTRY REGIMENTS AND THE IMPERIAL GUARD

Lift infantry regiments or 'Huscarles' are the private armies of the Imperial nobility. The greatest of these armies is the Imperial Guard, composed of 11 regiments of crack troops and other support units.

LIFT INFANTRY REGIMENTS

Largely a conceit of the Civil War era, powerful noble houses established personal bodyguard regiments, some of which were later converted into regular Imperial Army units. Perhaps the most famous of these is the 4518th Imperial Lift Infantry Regiment, the Duke of Regina's Own Huscarles. This unit was initially assembled for the protection of Baron Caranda of Regina, who modified the force into a fighting unit. The Huscarles were used to quell dissent among the worlds of the Marches after Arbellatra Alkhalikoi ascended to the role of Imperial Regent. They also fought in all subsequent Frontier Wars as contributed formations of the Imperial Army.

In the modern era, many noble houses retain similar units which have varying degrees of utility and battle-readiness. Based on the precedent set by the 4518th, these units are called household troops or simply Huscarles. These private regiments may be established as attached or contributed formations of the Imperial Army but the Emperor has stated his preference that they be of the latter. If the peerage is to keep private military forces, it is best they are seen as team players when it comes to serving the empire. Nevertheless, some nobles maintain regiments as strictly attached formations for various reasons.

It may seem contrary or even seditious to have private military forces in the Imperium but it is allowed for a number of reasons. At their best, lift infantry regiments set the standard for other army units. Because the armies of Imperial worlds are organised independently, standards are virtually impossible to enforce. As the armies of the peerage, Huscarles have access to Imperial technology, which they may train local forces to use. They operate as agents and advocates for the greater Imperial Army, proffering tactical and training standards that might otherwise not exist on worlds that are far from the Core. Their presence is also a not-so-subtle reminder to the citizens of the Imperium that should they fail to comply with Imperial law, the noble bureaucracy can be transformed into a tool of enforcement when called upon to do so.

There are places in the Imperium where the nobility is much more at odds with one another but nobles are strictly forbidden to directly engage each other in private wars with their Huscarles regiments. In contentious sectors like Deneb, opposed noble houses sometimes push the envelope. Most are careful not to directly do battle with each other, but their Huscarles may sometimes be found on the same battlefield in direct opposition to each other with proxy forces formed from local armies and mercenaries doing the actual fighting.

For more information on Huscarles, refer to the article on the 4518th Lift Infantry in *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society Volume 2*.

THE IMPERIAL GUARD

The greatest of all household troops are the Emperor's Imperial Guard. Headquartered on Capital, the Imperial Guard are responsible for the defence of the Imperial Palace and its Emperor. The Guard was officially founded by Emperor Cleon I in the year 52 when it consisted of just one regiment, the hallowed Sylean Guard. However, the Guard claims that its history extends back to the Rule of Man, whose Emperor was also defended by a force known as the Imperial Guard.

Imperial Guard forces inhabit a broad, multi-level section near the crown of the spherical palace, where they are trained and housed. The Imperial Guard is designed to reflect the diversity of the Imperium and includes nine lift-infantry regiments (one from each Imperial Domain plus the Aslan and Marine regiments), as well as artillery and cavalry regiments.

- The Sylean Guard
- The Vilani Guard
- The Gateway Guard
- The Ilelish Guard
- The Antares Guard
- The Imperial Artillery
- The Household Cavalry
- The Spinward Marches Guard
- The Marine Guard (also known as the Marine Escort Service)
- The Aslan Guard
- The Solomani Guard

Adjuncts to the Guard are the Imperial Marine Escort Force, the Scout Service Protection Detail and the Imperial Navy Escort Squadron. The primary duty of the Marine Escort Force is to serve aboard the *Pax Imperii*, the 10,000-ton yacht that serves as the flagship of the Emperor's personal fleet. Members of the

Imperial Guard and its supporting forces are bestowed the honour of membership in the Knightly Order of the Emperor's Guard.

The Imperial Guard are regularly seen by the public when performing the popular changing of the guard ceremony in the parade grounds directly below the Grand Palace of Arbellatra. However, they are much more than ceremonial troops. Guard members are hand selected from the ranks of the Imperial Army and Marines for their martial talents and distinguished service. While most serve on Capital, Imperial Guard regiments have been assigned combat roles throughout history and deployed far and wide in service to the Imperium. Some of their more famous actions include an inspiring deployment to fight in the Vargr Campaigns, multiple Frontier War deployments, the fight to the death by the Aslan regiment in defence of Empress Jacqueline against Grand Admiral Olav and the palace coup that led to the ascendance of Emperor Gavin.

SERVING IN THE IMPERIAL GUARD

Travellers serving in Army or Marine careers may attempt to join the Imperial Guard. Most applications to the Guard occur mid-service, after the Traveller has already served one or more terms. Service in the Guard has the following prerequisites:

- Currently serving in the Army or Marines
- STR or END 10+
- Vacc Suit 1 or higher
- Received a promotion in the term just prior to application
- No Mishaps have been incurred during the Traveller's career

Qualification: 11+.
DM+1 if STR 10+. DM+1 if END 10+. DM+1 if SOC 9+.

A Traveller may attempt only one qualification roll for service in the Imperial Guard. Failure indicates that the Traveller was not accepted or washed out during the qualification trials and has been banned from future qualification attempts.

The first term served in the Guard is spent in training. In addition to the skill that is normally received, Travellers obtain one additional skill from the Imperial Guard Service Skills table.

Imperial Guard Service Skills

1D	Skill
1	Admin
2	Athletics
3	Carouse
4	Diplomat
5	Melee (blade)
6	Persuade

The Traveller may remain in the Imperial Guard if advancement is successful; otherwise, the Traveller leaves the Imperial Guard and may resume their career in the Army or Marines. Exceptions to the rule are the Marine Escort Service and the Aslan Guard. Members of these units may remain in the Guard for the duration of their careers regardless of whether they successfully advance in each term.

Travellers who serve two or more terms in the Imperial Guard receive DM+1 on all non-cash Benefit rolls and may automatically choose TAS Membership as one of their Benefits. In addition, the value of any material Benefit received (e.g., Gun, Blade, Implant) may be up to twice the value listed in the Benefit's description. The Traveller also receives SOC+2 from having served in the most hallowed and decorated service of the Imperial military forces.

Pax Imperii is the Imperial family's 10,000-ton yacht. This spacecraft is one of a kind and serves as both a luxurious conveyance for the Emperor and a mobile platform to travel with friends, fellow heads of state and other esteemed visitors under the protective presence of the Imperial Marine Escort Service. *Pax Imperii* travels with the Naval Escort Squadron, which consists of three *Sylean*-class battleships, an *Antiama*-class fleet carrier, a flight of *Sloan*-class fleet escorts and several jump-6 couriers for rapid transmission of information.

The *Pax Imperii* has many features, none more impressive than its common areas. The 40-ton crew commons are pedestrian but the 440-ton commons for the Imperial family and their guests is highly configurable. Before each voyage, a team that reports to the Emperor's private secretary uses specialised software to program the commons configuration. The space is apportioned based on who the guests are, what the purpose of the voyage is and, of course, what the Emperor wants. For example, if the Emperor is travelling with members of the Moot and visiting dignitaries from various worlds, the common area might be configured into a ballroom, a formal dining area, a card room, a tearoom and a conference centre. The common area is adjacent to the multi-environment area in the event that alien visitors are present who require an exotic atmosphere, high-pressure or aquatic environment, or other adjustments.

Configuring the common area requires a task check of varying difficulty, depending on the configuration requested.

Configure the common area for Princess Iphegenia's 16th Birthday Party Bash: Average (8+) Electronics (remote ops) check (1D hours, SOC).

Configuring the common area for a summit conference that involves multiple regional powers, including several alien dignitaries. A task chain is required. First, design the common area for the conference: Difficult (10+) Diplomat check (2D hours, SOC); followed by the implementation, configure the common area for the conference: Difficult (10+) Electronics (remote ops) check (2D hours, EDU + the effect of the Diplomat check).

The deck architecture of *Pax Imperii* is designed to make its guests feel at home. The crew sections are sequestered so that visitors are unlikely to see them unless they are taken on a tour of the ship. The Marine Escort barracks are located above and below the Emperor's quarters and near the configurable commons.

TL15		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	10,000 tons, Streamlined	—	600
	Radiation Shielding	—	250
	Reinforced	—	300
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 6	480	432
M-Drive	Thrust 2	200	400
J-Drive	Jump 4	1,005	1507.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 7,000	350	700
Fuel Tanks	J-4, 8 weeks of operation	4,070	—
Bridge	Holographic Display	60	62.5
Computer	Computer/35	—	30
Sensors	Improved	3	4.3
Weapons	Small Ion Cannon Bays x2	100	30
	Small Railgun Bays x2	100	60
	Triple turrets (long range beam lasers) x20	20	57.5
	Triple turrets (long range pulse lasers) x10	10	47.5
	Triple turrets (sandcasters) x10	10	17.5
	Point Defence Batteries (type III) x2	40	40

TL15		TONS	COST (MCR)
Screens	Meson Screens x2	20	40
	Nuclear Dampers x2	20	20
Ammunition	Railgun Shots x36	36	—
	Sandcaster Barrels x400	20	—
Systems	Fuel Processor (4,000 tons/day)	200	10
	Fuel Scoops	—	—
	Armouries x8	8	2
	Biosphere	100	20
	Gaming Space (200 tons)	200	1.2
	Medical Bays x4	16	8
	Multi-Environment Space (100 tons)	105	2.5
	Stables x4	40	0.1
	Vaults x2 (in concealed compartments)	24	12.48
	Workshops x10	60	9
Craft	Docking Spaces (95 tons) x4	420	105
	Shuttles x4	—	60.588
	Docking Spaces (4 tons) x4	20	5
	Air/rafts x4	—	1
Staterooms	Standard x120	480	60
	High x40	240	32
	Luxury x20	200	30
	Low Berths x20	10	1
	Barracks x40	80	4
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/4	—	0.4
	Library	—	—
	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Intellect	—	1
	Point Defence/2	—	12
Common Areas	Standard	40	4
	Configurable*	440	66
Cargo		773	—

** Configurable common area cost is multiplied by 1.5.*

Crew

Captain/Owner, Pilot, Astrogator, Engineers x45, Gunners x 44, Maintenance x10, Medics x2, Marines x 40, Officers x5, Administrators x5, Stewards x7

Hull: 4,400

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr422222/month

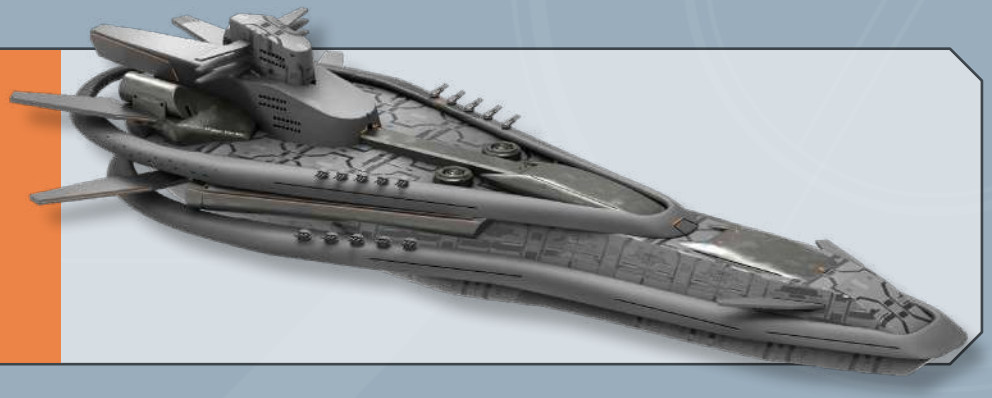
PURCHASE COST

MCr5066.668

Power Requirements

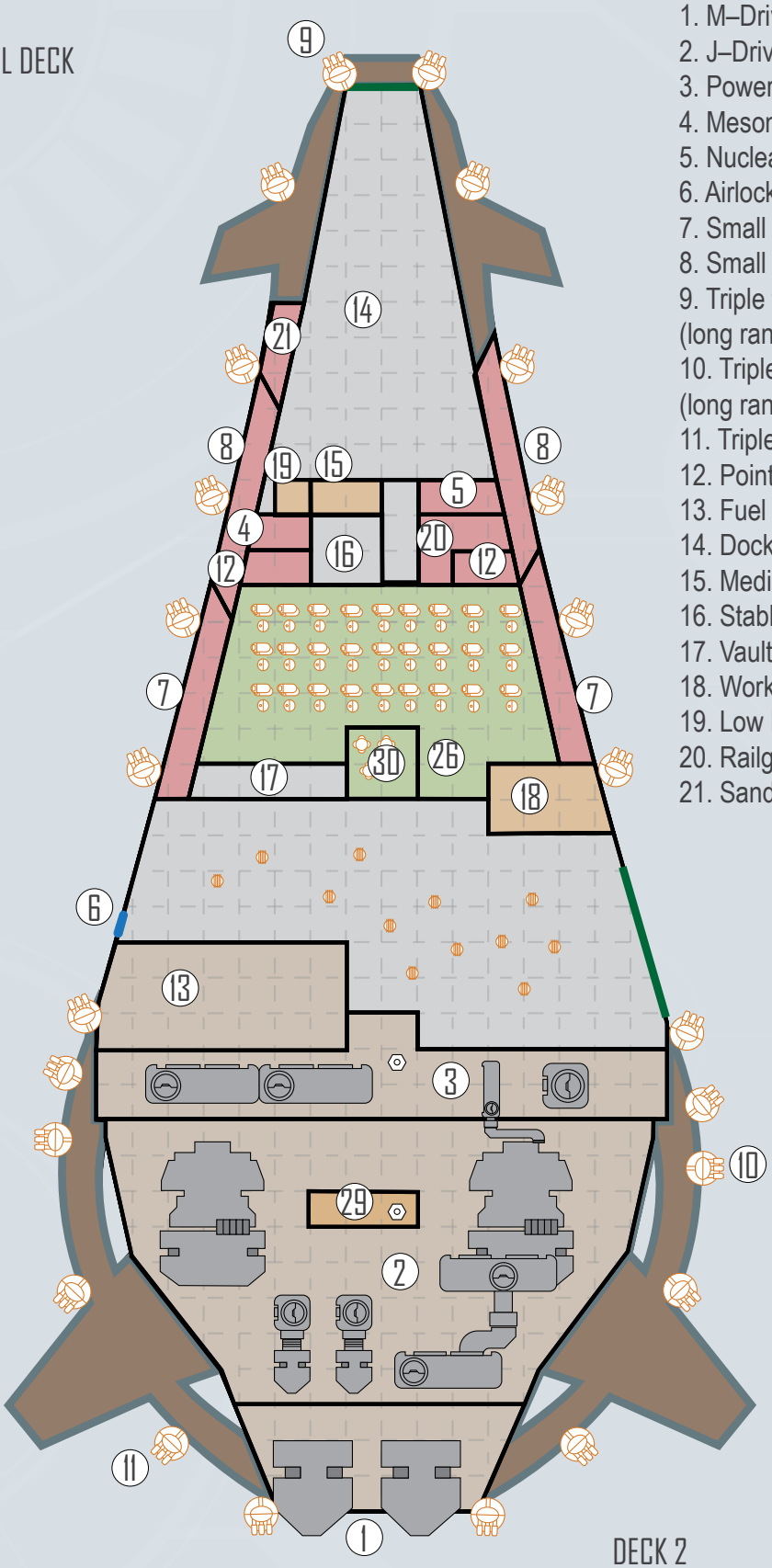
Basic Ship Systems	2,000
Manoeuvre Drive	2,000
Jump Drive	4,000
Sensors	4
Weapons	460
Fuel Processor	200

PAX IMPERII



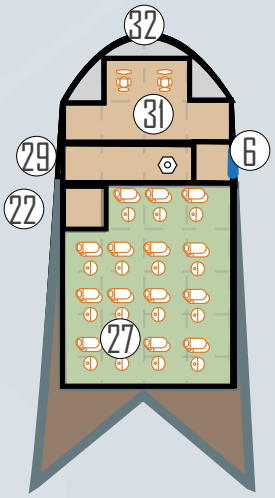
PAX IMPERII

DECK 1 – FUEL DECK

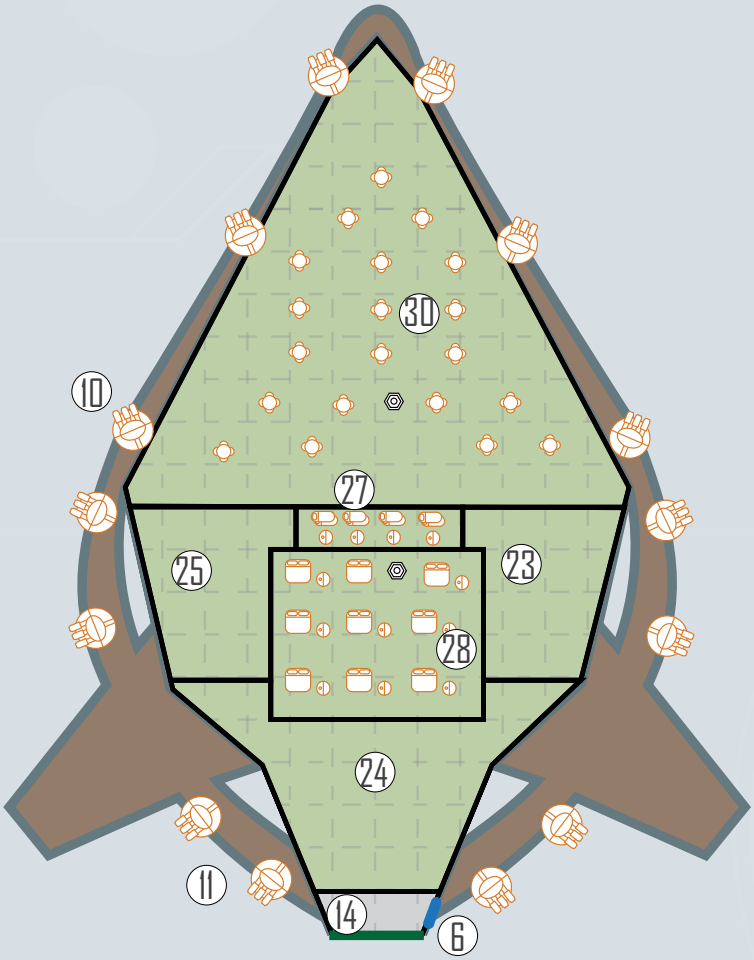


1. M–Drive
2. J–Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Meson Screens
5. Nuclear Dampers
6. Airlock
7. Small Ion Cannon Bays
8. Small Railgun Bays
9. Triple turrets
(long range beam lasers)
10. Triple turrets
(long range pulse lasers)
11. Triple turrets (sandcasters)
12. Point Defence Batteries
13. Fuel Processor
14. Docking Spaces
15. Medical Bays
16. Stables
17. Vaults
18. Workshops
19. Low Berths
20. Railgun Shots
21. Sandcaster Barrels

DECK 2



DECK 4



DECK 3

22. Armouries
23. Biosphere
24. Gaming Space
25. Multi-Environment Space
26. Staterooms
27. High Staterooms
28. Luxury Staterooms
29. Barracks
30. Common Area
31. Bridge
32. Sensors

1 SQUARE = 10 TONS

PROJECT SHORTBOW

As the Major Races began to reach out to the stars and build interstellar polities, most established the seat of empire in a single star system, usually on a single world. A capital might be placed on the surface of a system mainworld, the moon of a gas giant, a large hollowed out asteroid or even an orbital habitat. Such a capital is vulnerable to destruction by a large impactor. A bolide of significant size – perhaps only 10 or more kilometres in diameter – could be hurtled at such a target at high – even relativistic – speeds with cataclysmic effects. To prevent such a thing from happening, the Short Baseline Observation Window (a.k.a., Project Shortbow) programme was created.

Project Shortbow is administered and staffed by a secret agency of the Imperial Academy of Science and Medicine in concert with the Imperial Navy Science Division. The technology created by the project is essentially a collection of sensor devices and an immense telescopic array that watches for potentially hostile anomalies that might be directed towards Capital. Similar, less expansive systems exist on other Imperial worlds of great import, including Reference and the majority of Imperial Depots.

Shortbow is not a fool-proof system. Space is immense and it is nigh impossible to see all possible dangers; however, the technological aspect of the project is merely one component. Imperial Naval Intelligence has a veritable army of operatives who keep a watchful eye on dissident groups and other potential bad actors. If detected, it is better to nip such problems in the bud rather than waiting to let them mount a viable threat.

IMPERIAL INTERSTELLAR SCOUT SERVICE

The Scout Service is a fabled institution whose origins predate the Third Imperium. Scouts in the Sylean Federation were mostly freelance explorers who sold their data to the highest bidder until their services were organised under the aegis of the Sylean Federation Scout Service. The Scout Service was restructured and renamed the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service in the year 0.

The modern Scout Service has three branches: Communications, Survey and Exploration. The primary responsibility of the Communications branch is the operation and maintenance of the Imperial X-Boat Network, which provides communication services for the entire Imperium. X-boats are small starships with jump-4 capability that jump from system -to-system, transmitting mail and other data between Imperial worlds. With no manoeuvre drives of their own, x-boats are serviced by x-boat tenders, which are stationed in every system to which x-boats travel. A reserve of Type-S scout/couriers are also present to transfer information to worlds that are off the main x-boat routes.

The Survey branch is responsible for scientific data collection and stellar cartography (also called astrocartography). Survey scouts are the unsung heroes of the service, recording the stellar and planetology data of each system, working their way from the primary star to the Oort cloud and measuring for subtle changes on subsequent visits. Survey goes beyond Imperial borders to record data from foreign or unincorporated star systems.

SURVEY

COMMUNICATIONS

EXPLORATION

Survey Branch Mission Types

Survey Class	Description
Class I	Conducted from a distance of 1–2 parsecs, determines the basic stellar and planetary data of a star system. Duration: 1 day.
Class II	In-system survey of primary and subsequent stars and all planetary bodies of notable size. Duration: 1 week.
Class III	Detailed examination of notable planetary bodies. Landing parties launched when necessary. Duration: 10 weeks.
Class IV	Detailed survey of system mainworld and other habitable zone bodies. Probes and landing parties launched to confirm data. Duration: 30 weeks.
Class V	Detailed probes and surveys of all planetary bodies in a star system, including landing parties to confirm data. Duration: 5–10 years.

Exploration is often seen as the most glamourous branch of the Scout Service but it is also the most dangerous. More scouts serving in Exploration are lost than from any other branch. Exploration scouts are sent into charted but unexplored systems, their mission to perform cursory surveys and close examinations of planetary bodies if irregularities or anomalies are found. They may also be called upon to perform contact and liaison missions if sophonts are encountered. Newly discovered sophonts are often left alone if the Scout Service determines that a species should be allowed to develop at its own pace and without Imperial interference. Worlds with such populations are sometimes interdicted. Such missions may last centuries or even millennia if necessary.

The one thing all three branches have in common is the Type-S scout, the modern version of which is the *Suleiman*-class. The Communications branch uses them to transport information to worlds that are off the x-boat routes, keeping them in the loop and ensuring that every Imperial world has access to current information. The Survey and Exploration branches use them as utility starships, performing any number of necessary tasks. Type-S scouts are sometimes named by their crews but officially they only have call signs: a single letter (C for Communications, S for Survey or E for Exploration), six numerical digits followed by a hyphen and a random letter. Survey scouts also use the *Donosev*-class survey scout ship, a 400-ton ship with more advanced sensors, which enables them to collect the detailed data required.

The Scout Service is overseen by Administration and Operations offices that report to each branch. Administration is responsible for the upkeep of the service, making sure that it has the starships, small craft, vehicles, gear and other resources that it needs to do its many jobs. Administration also recruits new members to the service, often from far-flung worlds of the Imperium. The IISS, more than any other military service, is known for its diversity and inclusion policies. The service actively recruits alien sophonts from all Imperial worlds – and sometimes those beyond its borders – and is known for providing or even devising special equipment to accommodate those from exotic

environments. Subordinate to Administration are the Technical Services and Detached Duty offices. Technical Services are called upon to solve complex technical problems or fix damaged scout ships and other equipment. Scouts from each branch are expected to be technically competent and repair their own gear if possible, so Technical Services are only called upon for the most difficult jobs. The Detached Duty office maintains and assigns the service's immense fleet of retired starships. They also keep track of the ex-scouts to which these ships have been assigned. The phrase 'Once a scout, always a scout' is the credo of Detached Duty who track down and assign missions to scouts who have been blessed with the possession of a hardy scout/courier for their own use.

The Operations division of each branch – called 'Ops' by members of the service – evaluates and assigns all scout missions. Jobs in Operations are often thought to be mundane; they are, in fact, anything but. Ops assignments are often on frontier worlds, backwaters and other underserved places where the IISS has deployed a base. Ops personnel are always linked with one of the three primary branches and sometimes manage to put themselves in danger when evaluating whether a mission is required. Ops also includes the vaunted Security division, which protects valuable service assets and engages in espionage activities.

While the scouts are often viewed as only a scientific service or perhaps 'paramilitary' at best, they do put themselves in harm's way and also provide some distinctly military services. The Scout Service Imperial Protection Detail has served the Emperor for centuries, operating as a lightly armed secret service whose sole job it is to prevent an assassination from taking place, sacrificing their lives if necessary.

SCOUT BASES AND WAY STATIONS

The IISS maintains a system of bases and way stations. Scout bases include administrative centres and repair and maintenance facilities for scout vessels. Scout bases may be located on worlds with a Class D or better starport but are most common on worlds with lower starport levels. Many of these worlds are found in low-tech, out-of-the-way star systems. Scout bases may be located in orbital or planetary facilities since the majority of scout ships are in the sub-1,000-ton range.

Way stations provide support, repair and maintenance for the vast Imperial X-Boat Network and training and personnel services for the entire IISS. Way stations are found only on worlds with Class A or B starports. There are typically two to four way stations per sector with as many as nine in the more populous, centrally located sectors of the Imperium.

MERCENARY FORCES

The worlds of the Imperium are rife with opportunities for the mercenary soldier. Despite its vastness, great wealth and the power of its military forces, the Imperium cannot be everywhere at once, nor does it try to be. Its worlds are free to raise their own armies and govern themselves as they wish, provided they do not break Imperial laws. As such, conflicts develop between rival forces on individual worlds and, in some cases, between worlds in neighbouring star systems. The Imperium rarely gets involved in these dustups unless they threaten the regional economy or passage of free trade. To a certain extent, the Imperium actually supports the notion of small, contained wars as a necessary outlet for social and political pressures. Suppressing conflicts can cause greater problems than simply allowing them to progress naturally. This is where the soldier for hire comes into play.

Mercenary forces have found active employment in all sectors of the Imperium. A common misconception is that mercenaries are less common closer to the Imperial Core, which is far from the case. The types of tickets available on the frontier may differ from those in the interior but the uneven landscape of the Imperium is fallow ground for dissension and conflict. When conflicts escalate to war, parties with the means may hire mercenaries to achieve specific objectives, secure their territory or assets from real or perceived threats, train militias and armies in the use of modern weaponry and, in many cases, simply to fight alongside their own armies.

Conflicts between nations and worlds are not the only venues where mercenaries find gainful employment. Corporations and megacorporations frequently hire them. Security contracts are given to reputable mercenary units to protect key personnel, industrial facilities, prototypes being transferred between corporate sites and similar jobs. Corporations sometimes engage each other in more direct conflict as well. As long as such conflicts do not boil over and affect the Imperial economy in a noticeable way, they are often allowed to occur.

The mercenary services market varies widely. At the lower end, some are barely more than vagabonds with a few combat skills who hire on as paid killers.

Independent contractors with a higher degree of professionalism sell their skills to more reputable clients and often hire on with a bonded mercenary company. Mercenary companies vary widely as well. Some are generalists who take on a variety of contracts, others specialise in fields like shipboard defence, security, commando operations, mobile armour and field training. The size of these companies varies, with some as small as a fire team and others battalion-sized or larger.

For more information on mercenaries and rules for running detailed mercenary campaigns, refer to the *Mercenary* box set.

DEEP DIVE

Security, Platoon. Cr100000 per month plus salaries and bonus. Ongoing.

Zirgamsa Ruaka Corporation (ZRC) is a resource-extraction firm focused on obtaining materials for the starship manufacturing industry. ZRC is a well-funded firm whose lead investor is Achenaar Antilles, the sector-wide merchant line. ZRC is headquartered on Gaen Luum/Core and has a limited-term contract to develop a previously untouched undersea lanthanum lode on Arvlaa Gam. Arvlaa Gam does not have the resources or technology to access the lode and requires the assistance of its high-tech neighbour. After the term of their contract has expired, ZRC must terminate the extraction operation and leave the gear behind for a consortium of local firms to continue working the mine.

Arvlaa Gam is administered by Saregon but its people are largely left to govern themselves. The power vacuum sometimes creates conflicts between industrial concerns on the planet. A conglomeration of mining firms confidentially established the contract with ZRC, going over the heads of its own miners' union. The project was intended to be confidential but there was a leak. ZRC considered scuttling the operation but a lanthanum shortage in the Shesh belt made them decide to go through with it in spite of the risks. The union and excluded companies have expressed their displeasure that the mine was being developed without their involvement by an offworld agency. The union and some of the excluded mining companies have vowed to oppose the operation, violently if necessary.

ZRC needs a platoon-sized mercenary unit to provide security for a multiple-phase ticket. They are offering Cr100000 per month plus standard salaries for the unit for the duration of the ticket. An additional bonus of Cr50000 will be given if none of ZRC's equipment is damaged by the opposition.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

There are a number of issues at play here. On the surface, a ragtag group of miners should pose no threat to a well-trained and equipped platoon of mercenaries. However, what neither ZRC nor the mercenaries know is that the lanthanum acquired has already been pre-sold to a subsidiary of Achenaar Antilles. Tukera Lines, which is in heated competition for routes in the Saregon subsector, has gotten word of this operation through its corporate intelligence arm. Tukera has surreptitiously equipped the miners with high-tech weapons and equipment from offworld. While most of the miners are not well-trained in the use of the equipment, merely having it makes them more dangerous than expected. In addition, Tukera operatives are providing support and intelligence to the miners.

MISSION PHASES

The first phase of the mission is to secure the starport on Gaen Luum while mining equipment and vehicles are loaded onto Achenaar Antilles freighters. The Arvlaa Gam Miners' Union is not thought to have the resources or reach to sabotage the mission at this point but ZRC is a somewhat paranoid company and does not want to take chances.

The second phase is the arrival on Arvlaa Gam and transit to the work site. The platoon is split into two sections for this phase. One accompanies part of the expedition to the coastal city of Madinudadi, where ZRC is to rent several submersibles and other watercraft for use at the work site. The second section reports directly to the work site where survey and initial set-up is performed, including the construction of a floating structure where the ZRC miners, personnel and mercenaries will be housed for the duration of the operation.

The third phase is to make sure that the operation is secure for its duration. ZRC suggests setting up listening posts in the region.

The final phase is to provide cover for ZRC during the return jump to Gaen Luum.

THE MINERS' UNION

The union are a rough-and-tumble bunch, many of whom are former soldiers. They are not in the business of fighting wars but Arvlaa Gam is a tough world and its laissez-faire industrial sector is not above fighting over resources. In short, an assault on the mercenaries will not be the first time they have engaged in combat. They are not nearly as organised as a qualified mercenary unit but underestimating their abilities would be unwise. Their morale is initially high but drops quickly if they encounter setbacks.

CHARACTERISTIC	VALUE	DM
Force Name	Miners' Union	—
Unit Size	Two platoons	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	-3
Combat	5	-1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	-2
Support	3	-1
CEI or DEI	5	-1
Morale	8	0
Reputation	3	-2

THE OPPOSITION

The goal of the miner's union is to disrupt the ZRC operation on Arvlaa Gam and to prevent it from extracting lanthanum from the mine. If they can accomplish this with sabotage, thereby avoiding armed conflict, they will do so. However, if the mercenaries do their jobs well, and they prevent the miners' union from accomplishing their goals, the union will become increasingly frustrated, eventually resorting to a more direct approach.

If the Travellers do not set up listening posts or some other form of surveillance, they are likely to be taken by surprise. Thanks to Tukera, the miners are equipped with high-tech submersibles, surface watercraft and weapons with which they intend to attack the ZRC mining platform, killing anyone who resists and imprisoning the others, possibly to ransom them back to ZRC. The attack is likely to be multi-faceted, with the mercenaries forced to defend multiple sites at once.

TICKET SUCCESS INDICATORS

This ticket has the following success criteria:
1: CRITICAL: Secure the mining platform, mining equipment and protect all ZRC personnel from attack.
2: IMPORTANT: Prevent sabotage to all ZRC gear during deployment and departure.
3: ROUTINE: Determine in advance whether an attack is planned and by whom.
4: ROUTINE: Keep the ZRC staff informed with daily briefings and situation reports.

One Critical, one Important and two Routine objectives give a maximum TSI of 11. The Travellers must run an airtight security operation to achieve all of these objectives. Simply going to and from Arvlaa Gam and waiting for someone to attack is likely to result in a lower score.

INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

There are intelligence agencies at all levels of Imperial government. Much as worlds are allowed to govern themselves, they are also allowed to gather their own intelligence provided they do not act against the interests of the Imperium itself. Likewise, members of the Imperial bureaucracy at the planetary, subsector, sector and sometimes even the domain level operate networks of agents who perform surveillance activities, engage in espionage, analyse collected data and use the obtained information to inform their decisions.

Intelligence agencies assume many forms from immense bureaucratic organisations down to small cabals of informers. The Imperial Army, Scout Service and Navy each have intelligence-gathering arms. Army Intelligence is primarily concerned with gathering strategic information about the worlds of the Imperium and those of its potential enemies. Internally, Army Intelligence keeps track of political movements, insurrections, terrorist groups and others whom they may be called upon to oppose. They also keep up-to-date cartographic information on all Imperial worlds and those of foreign polities near Imperial borders.

IMPERIAL NAVAL INTELLIGENCE

Perhaps the best-known spy agency is Imperial Naval Intelligence (INI). The INI has officers posted to most Imperial Navy bases. The vast majority of INI officers are administrators who use the navy's considerable reach to surveil and collect data on everything from current events on Imperial worlds, interplanetary incidents, interstellar anomalies, potential threats to the Imperium, conflicts between rival corporate entities and merchant activity at all levels, from megacoporate freighters down to the interface lines. It is considerably more difficult to track the activities of tramp traders but the INI has been known to investigate suspected smugglers, pirates and other suspected malcontents among the free trader community from time-to-time.

INI administrators are given broad discretionary powers, including the ability to hire and train agents. Mid-level INI officers, often called 'minders', are permitted to build intelligence networks with certain guidelines and limitations. These networks are composed of smaller units called cells, which typically include 4–12 individual agents. Cells are carefully cultivated and managed by their minders and a given cell might not even be aware of another's existence within the same organisation or that of another minder. Minders are careful to prevent their cells from working at cross purposes or inadvertently interfering with each other's missions. The technology available to INI administrators makes managing a complex array of cells relatively trivial but care must be taken nonetheless.

IISS INTELLIGENCE

The Scout Service also maintains an intelligence service, which is subordinate to its Security division. Unlike the navy, where INI officers manage a network of intelligence agents, in the scouts agents are part of the standard IISS framework. The scouts have a much looser hierarchy than the navy and their intelligence services reflect that. Agents do not receive specialised training, instead using the skills they have acquired in their chosen branch to carry out espionage and intelligence-gathering duties.

While there is no official structure such as that in the INI, members of IISS Intelligence often build networks of cells that resemble those of the navy. Their primary recruits are retired scouts, particularly those assigned scout ships by the Detached Duty division. Obligated by the Scout Service to serve when called upon to do so, detached duty scouts and their ships make

ON HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE

Most INI officers stay in administrative roles and operatives are rarely drawn from long-term career ranks of the navy itself. However, naval officers can and do become field agents on occasion. These agents have their naval rank frozen for the duration of their service as intelligence operatives. Many are outfitted with augments that prevent them from being able to give up state secrets or key data regarding the movement or operation of Imperial Navy vessels.

Travellers may be created who have served in both INI administration or field operative roles. Travellers in INI administration must be officers in the line/crew assignment of the Navy career. However, skills received from the Line/Crew table are replaced with the following:

1D	LINE/CREW
1	Electronics
2	Admin
3	Gun Combat
4	Streetwise
5	Persuade
6	Deception

To become an INI field agent, the Traveller must first serve at least one term in the Navy career, then successfully qualify for the Agent career, selecting the intelligence assignment. Failure to qualify indicates that the Traveller's request to receive a field agent posting has been denied. Terms served as a field agent are carried out as a separate career. However, if the Traveller opts to transfer back into the Navy administration role, no roll is required; the Traveller simply resumes the following term in line/crew, as before, returning to the rank held previously. The Traveller may also opt to transfer to another branch in the Navy career as normal. When mustering out, the Traveller may make all rolls on the Navy Benefits tables or may split the rolls between the two careers based on terms served in each.

excellent spies. Scouts who run the networks are not called minders as they are in the INI but do have a number of less-official nicknames, some of which are a little derisive. Den mother, trail boss and cat herder are some of the more popular ones.

Agents in the Scout Service are often seen as 'the foreign office' whereas INI agents operate within the Imperium most of the time. Many scouts, especially those in the Exploration branch, have travelled beyond Imperial borders, giving them a greater understanding of alien cultures and foreign polities. As such, they often make better operatives for missions outside of the Imperium; intelligence agents from the scouts are often recruited by INI minders when they require an agent with foreign expertise.

THE AGENT

Patron: INI Minder, Lt. Nimath Tence, who might be a Contact or Ally of one of the Travellers but at the very least he has selected them on good authority that they are a trustworthy group loyal to the Imperium.
Location: Rorpa Din/Chant.
Pre-requisites: This patron encounter is based on Marc Miller's *Traveller* novel, *Agent of the Imperium*. Ideally, the Traveller who installs the Angin wafer will have read the book in order to play the role of Jonathan Bland, the Decider.
Requirement: One Traveller in the group must have a wafer jack and neural link.
Equipment: One Angin wafer.
Mission: After one of the Travellers installs the Angin wafer, he becomes Jonathan Bland for the duration of the patron encounter and subsequent adventure. Bland will go through his standard operating procedure, first asking the group, 'Who is senior?' and then proceeding to conduct the operation, applying Rules 1–6 of the Agent Standing Orders, as described in *Agent of the Imperium*. Lt. Tence informs him that a group of insurgents has allegedly infiltrated the proxy government of Rorpa Din, which is administered offworld by the government of Traa. While the organisation of the insurgents is unknown, it is believed they have obtained nuclear weapons that they intend to use to attack either against Rorpa Din itself or some of the most populous asteroids of the Traa system. Lt. Tence had a cell of agents monitoring the insurgents' activities and they found out what was going on. Unfortunately, he has lost contact with the members of his cell and fears the worst. Because there is a perceived threat to a world of the Imperium and no viable Imperial authority present, Lt. Tence opted to use the Angin wafer to find out what he should do next.
Reward: Cr100000 per Traveller and possible future agent assignments for the group.

Item	TL	Kg	Cost
Angin Wafer	15	—	—

The Angin wafer is, by all appearances, designed for insertion into a standard wafer jack. However, once inserted, the mind of the user is taken over by a Decider agent, one of several coded personalities based on a previously living servant of the Imperium named Jonathan Bland. The Traveller is under Bland's control as long as the wafer is in place.

THE NOBILITY

There are three ways to become a member of the Imperial nobility. The first is simply the passage of noble patent through heredity, the second comes from something good happening – an honour grant – and the third implies that something bad has occurred, resulting in revocation of title and subsequent reinstatement or reassignment.

The most common passage of noble title occurs through heredity. While there are no assurances that the offspring of an effective and honourable noble will serve with the same level of distinction, hereditary passage of title provides stability, especially given the immense breadth of the Imperium. Noble titles are usually passed on to the firstborn heir, sometimes with preference for the firstborn male or female but there are no rules that govern this and nobles may ultimately decide for themselves whom among their heirs receives the patent. Many nobles have more than one title and liberally distribute them among their heirs, which can cause discord if there are no established rules of heredity in place.

Honour nobles are given their titles as a reward for achievements, including military victories, success in business or accomplishments in academia. Titles for honour nobles include knight, baronet, baron and, on rare occasions, marquis. Noble patents for knights, barons and marquises are granted by the Emperor but baronets are traditionally granted only by archdukes. Noble patents are granted twice per year, once on Holiday (the first day of the year) and again on the Emperor's birthday. Most honour patents do not lead to enfeoffment (land acquisition). The title of marquis is an exception as it typically includes a fief but landless marquises are not unknown. When a fief is not immediately granted, a marquis patent typically implies that one may follow. Indeed, a march – the name of a land grant given to a marquis – is often dangled as an enticement for further good service.

Bad behaviour among the peerage is not unknown and can result in the suspension or revocation of a noble patent by the Emperor or the Moot. However, for the sake of stability, wayward nobles or at least their heirs are often reinstated later. Although nobles swear fealty and a pledge of honour to the Emperor, transgressions do occur from time-to-time; treason, kidnapping, extortion and other crimes are common cause for patent revocation. The Imperial feudal system is intended to prevent such things from happening but not every archduke watches their dukes like a hawk, nor does every duke keep a close eye on their counts and so forth. The temptation to defy Imperial law or the dictates of one's superiors is apparently too great to resist for some among the noble ranks. There are times when such resistance is justified. For example, a count may refuse to follow the orders of an incompetent duke and actually pursue the revocation of his superior through various channels. History has shown that such bids are rarely successful unless incontrovertible evidence of incompetence or other malfeasance is provided. The system favours hierarchical order and stability and the Moot does not tolerate insubordination lightly.

The highest rate of revocation is at the knight level but all manner of titles have been stripped including that of duke. Revocation is not levied lightly and often preceded by a suspension, especially when a lesser violation has occurred. Suspensions can last years or even decades, depending on the seriousness of the infraction and follows when the noble in question refuses to make amends or shows no remorse for the actions that caused the suspension. A contrite noble can usually get their title back at the Emperor's mercy. Even if there is a lack of contrition on the part of the offender, if the remainder of their family continues to serve the Imperium in good will, reinstatement often follows and the patent is reassigned to a more cooperative member of the family. This is most likely to occur when the family in question has a great deal of power. For example, it is difficult for the Emperor to deny a family that also chairs a megacorporation or has flag-rank naval officers.

There are times when the revoked noble and their family are so steeped in corruption or dishonour that the Emperor or the Moot has no choice but to permanently revoke the patent. In this case, the patent is reassigned to a noble of the next tier, resulting in a promotion to the vacant rank. While this is rare, when it does happen, contention for the patent can be quite fierce and the Imperial Navy may be called upon to ensure a peaceful transition of power.

Noble Ranks

SOC	Noble Title	Appellation	Fief
10	Gentleman or Lady	Sir or Madam. If in service to a knight, some append their name with the suffix, esquire or simply esq.	None.
11	Knight	Sir or Lord. Some female recipients use Dame.	None for honour nobles. Up to 100km^2 for rank nobles on their homeworld only.
12	Baronet	Baronet followed by the family name.	None for honour nobles. Up to 100km^2 for rank nobles on their homeworld only.
12	Baron	The Right Honourable Baron (or Baroness), followed by the family name, which is preceded by haut, hault or von. For example, Baron Jarem haut-Devereux.	None for honour nobles. Up to 100km^2 for rank nobles on any world of the Imperium.
13	Marquis	Illustrious Sir for honour nobles, Your Excellency for rank nobles, followed by the rank and world name over which the marquis (or marquess) presides. For example, Your Excellency, the Marquis Ankod. Note that a marquess is a female marquis while a marquioness is a female married to the marquis or marquess who holds the title.	Typically none for honour nobles. For rank nobles, a large fief on a world with a Class A or B starport or an entire world of any starport type.
14	Viscount or Count	The Right Honourable Count (or Countess), followed by the name of the most prestigious world over which the count presides. For example, the Right Honourable Count Ganad.	One powerful star system or 2–3 systems of various power and prestige.
15	Duke	Your Grace, followed by the prefix 'of' and the name of the subsector or sector over which the Duke (or Duchess) presides. For example, Your Grace, the Duke of Aramis.	One subsector or, in the case of the Sector Duke, an entire sector.
16	Archduke	Your Grace, followed by the name of the domain over which the Duke (or Duchess) presides. For example, Your Grace, the Archduke of Ilelish.	One domain (four sectors).
17	Emperor	Your Imperial Majesty.	One empire.

In addition to the more formal appellations listed above, 'Your Grace' or 'Your Majesty' may be used in reference to nobles ranked Baron or above. For Knights, simply 'My Lord' or 'Madam' will suffice.

It should be noted that the Imperium is a vast place and there is a great deal of variation among its worlds. In some societies, noble titles may be conflated to convey immense importance (for example, 'Your Most Illustrious and Accomplished Eminence') while on more egalitarian worlds, such appellations are often done away with altogether. Variety is the spice of life and Travellers are likely to encounter many different situations when it comes to the nobility and their acceptance – or lack thereof – by the worlds over which they preside.

The Emperor may award noble patents of all ranks but those ranked marquis and above are members of the peerage and may only receive a patent from the Emperor. Knights and baronets may be granted patents by archdukes but only within their domains. This enables the archdukes to build allegiances within their domains without the aid of the Emperor.

RANKS WITHIN THE RANKS

Noble rank and the origin of patent are only half the story. There is a complex hierarchy within the nobility guided as much by tradition as the letter of the law. Honour nobles have lower status than rank nobles, especially when the rank noble gained the title hereditarily instead of through service. For example,

the greatest sculptor in all of the Core may have been granted an honour barony as a reward for his great works, some of which even adorn the Hall of Wisdom in the Grand Palace of Arbellatra. At court, this noble, despite all of his grand achievements, is considered to be below a ranked baron whose family has held the middling world of Siduka for generations. Heredity, patent longevity and enfeoffment always outrank honour achievements, no matter how lofty.

Some rank nobles have higher status than other rank nobles as well, based on the concept of precedence. Precedence indicates the length of time that a noble family has held a patent. The older the patent, the greater the prestige. Loyal noble families who have maintained good standing with the Emperor may have held a patent for generations or even centuries. Holding such a patent confers great responsibilities. Rank noble patents almost universally include a fief, which may be anywhere from a few hundred square kilometres on a single world to a whole planet, multiple planets, an entire subsector and so on.

Merely holding land is not enough to maintain prestige when one's family holds a patent of high precedence. This is where the concept of high nobility comes into play. The great noble families carry a responsibility of service to the Imperium and typically hold positions within the bureaucracy, diplomatic roles, judicial positions and business or military leadership roles. Political roles are not out of the question but generally speaking, governance is left to individual worlds.

THE MOOT

The high nobility serve the Imperium by sending representatives to the Moot, the highest bureaucratic body of the nobility in the Imperium. Members of the Moot are all nobles ranked baron or higher, although many send proxies to represent them. The noble families are encouraged to send representatives from their respective families, which most do, but some appoint a third party. Those who truly want to wield power either attend in person or send the heir to their noble patent.

The Moot have essentially one power; to dissolve the Imperium. This responsibility is not taken lightly but has been entertained from time-to-time over the course of Imperial history. During the Civil War, the chaotic reign of Cleon III and other times of crisis, members of the Moot threatened to use the power of dissolution. In practice, use of this power brings the opposed sides together to compromise but in theory it could actually result in the breakup of the Imperium should things get bad enough. It is a powerful but dangerous tool and its usage is not to be taken lightly.

Although dissolution is the Moot's only actual ability, this does not mean that it is the only thing the nobility discusses within the chambers of the Moot Spire. All manner of subjects pertaining to the Imperium are discussed and high-ranking members of the Moot frequently meet with and advise the Emperor. While the Emperor is the only executive authority in the Imperium, he takes the advice of the Moot seriously. The Emperor is not all-knowing and cannot be expected to be clued into everything that is happening in his empire. He is given daily briefs about events happening throughout the Imperium but such information is often factual, unemotional and lacks context. For accurate, more nuanced information, he must rely upon his nobles, each of whom can give him a detailed account about what is actually happening in each of the Imperium's sectors, right down to events on individual worlds if need be. The de facto leader of the Moot is the Chancellor, a high noble drawn from its ranks whom the Emperor feels he can trust. The Chancellorship is a much sought-after position and is usually a lifetime appointment.

The Moot Spire is a 1.75 kilometre tall structure located a mere 4.25 kilometre from the Emperor's palace. Symbolically, the peak of the spire is allowed to rise above the crown of the Grand Palace except on one day; when a new Emperor is appointed. On that day, the subterranean gravitic compensators raise the altitude of the place so that its crown is 100m above the peak of the Moot Spire, indicating the 'Emperor Ascendant'. More information about the Moot Spire is provided in the description of Capital on page 155.

ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

Among the most lively institutions within the nobility are its many orders of knighthood. Upon achieving the rank of knight, recipients of the title are granted membership in one of the Imperium's dozens of orders. The most common orders are those of each domain: The Order of Antares, the Order of Gateway, the Order of Sol, the Order of Sylea and the Order of Vland. Assignment to each of these orders is conferred by the Archduke of each domain. The Domain of Deneb does not have an order of its own because it has no Archduke. However, the knights of this frontier region have done what they can to make up for that by establishing several private orders, some of which are quite exclusive.

Many orders have been established to represent certain goals, responsibilities and achievements. Military veterans who achieve knighthood become members of the Order of the Sword. Ex-scouts and other deep-space explorers are granted membership in the Order of the Arrow. Knights who achieved their rank by accomplishment in the sciences become members of the Order of Fusion. The Order of the Emperor's Guard is by nature a rather exclusive order since membership is only granted to soldiers who serve in the ranks of the Guard. There are also orders for loyal alien citizens who have been made knights, including the Order of Hlyuea for Aslan and the Order of Gvadakoung for Vargr, both of which were founded by Empress Arbellatra.

There are also many secret orders of knighthood, established for various purposes. Secret orders usually have a noble sponsor among the peerage whose responsibilities are clandestine in nature and therefore not revealed to the public. Many former Imperial intelligence operatives belong to secret orders and are sometimes called upon for their expertise in confidential matters. They may even be asked to accept secret missions in service to high-ranking members of the peerage or the Emperor himself.

Perhaps the most prestigious order of all is the Order of Starship and Crown, which has only a few hundred members. The knights of this order pledge a special oath of loyalty to the Emperor and have committed themselves to do his bidding no matter the request and often taking on special missions in service to the throne. Knights of this order proudly wear its logo on a badge or tabard, which depicts an iconic starship surrounded by a ring (representing the crown) in gold on a black background.

Order of Starship and Crown badge

Membership in an order confers several benefits that are similar to those who possess a Travellers' Aid Society membership. Knights of a certain domain can often obtain free high passage aboard starships provided they travel within the realm of their title. Worlds with a Class A starport and Population 6+ often have hostels that exclusively serve the knighthood community, sometimes only those of certain orders. Membership in an order provides a ready pool of potential contacts and patrons for knighted Travellers. Meeting or simply coming into contact with other members of one's order might also result in a request for assistance. When another knight of the order asks for help, it is expected that their fellow knight will comply. To do otherwise risks damage to one's reputation and possibly expulsion from the order.

The bonds of fellowship that develop between the knights of an order create ready pools of able noblemen for the peerage to access. Relatively few knights have fiefs to manage and are therefore seen as resources by higher ranking nobles. Groups of knights from an order – or in some cases, the entire available membership – may be called upon from time-to-time by a baron or higher to accomplish a task in service to the Imperium. The peerage knows and trusts knighted women and men, all of whom have sworn their loyalty to the Emperor. Much like a plea for help from a fellow knight of one's order, requests from the peerage are defied or resisted at one's peril. Despite the responsibilities entailed, many knights enjoy their noble rank and do not desire promotion. Higher noble ranks confer levels of responsibility that many do not desire. While the call to service may come at any time, knights of the Imperium are seen as the errant knights of old, brave and chivalrous Travellers who wander between the stars, searching for adventure in the service of the Emperor.

POLITICAL ROLES

The Imperial bureaucracy and the nobles who serve within it manage the 11,000 worlds of the Imperium. The practice of enfeoffment grants them land holds of various sizes. Nobles rent and tax the land under their purview but ultimately it still belongs to the Emperor and can be taken back at his whim. For the most part, noble patents do not indicate actual rulership of worlds, subsectors or sectors over which nobles preside. As mentioned elsewhere, the Imperium largely governs the space between worlds and not the worlds themselves. That task falls mostly upon the people who live there, many of whom are citizens of civilisations that have been present for centuries, if not millennia.

The role of the noble is to maintain an aloof presence, be a caretaker for the Emperor but not one who interferes in the daily governance of worlds other than to ensure that the flow of trade is unimpeded and citizens do not violate Imperial law. Should the latter occur, the noble has little direct power to influence a preferable outcome. While some nobles maintain household troops – some of whom are so well geared that they could indeed take over a small planet – the primary recourse of the noble is to call upon the diplomatic corps or, if necessary, the Imperial military to resolve conflicts.

There are, of course, circumstances in which nobles do take a role in government. When civilian governments collapse, are in a state of transition or the world simply has so few inhabitants that there is little need for a complex governmental structure, members of the nobility may be called upon to lead. Most who do so take only an interim role with the provision that should the civilian inhabitants of the world eventually strive for self-rule, the noble shall step aside and let them form the government of their choice. When this happens, there is usually a peaceful transition but there have been a few incidents in which nobles have been reluctant to concede power. This can occur for a number of reasons: the noble is using the land for resource extraction or other forms of wealth generation and does not want to risk local interference; the new government-in-waiting has bad relations with the noble or possibly even the Imperium at large; or the noble in question simply enjoys the power of rulership and does not want to give it up. Regardless of the reason, Imperial law is clear: civilian governments should be given the right of self-determination and any fiction that dictates otherwise must ultimately be removed. Like so many Imperial laws, the rules are left vague in order to prevent the Emperor from being bound by precedent but nobles who resist this tradition do so at their peril and that of their noble patent. Nobles reluctant to give up power have found themselves on the wrong side of an Imperial Marines invasion whereupon their regime is put down in cursory fashion and rule is granted to the locals.

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

The primary responsibility of the Imperial nobility is to serve as an adhesive that keeps worlds together. Nobles are expected to exhibit loyalty to the Emperor with honour as their guiding principle. Keeping the whole thing together requires an extensive bureaucracy and the nobility are the lattice upon which this is built.

To some extent the nobility are the watchdogs of the Emperor. Imperial law has a few fully defined tenets and a broad array of traditions that the nobility must interpret and enforce. Most Imperial laws are deliberately vague to prevent them from being subjected to precedent and to keep local governments from designing loopholes to evade them. The Imperium is a large polity and legal arguments cannot easily be conducted across its broad expanse. For example, it is broadly known that impeding free trade is a violation of Imperial law. When the government of a world takes issue with the trade practices of a neighbouring world and uses its planetary navy to create a blockade or enforce an embargo upon the offending world, the local nobility must ascertain whether or not free trade is ultimately being impeded or served. More often than not, the task of the nobility is to do absolutely nothing. The Imperium tries to avoid becoming involved in local affairs unless they threaten to spill over into the greater interstellar community.

The nobility must often walk a fine line. A noble who takes sides or gets involved too early in a conflict runs the risk of becoming intrusive or, worse, autocratic. On the other hand, if a noble waits too long to intercede on behalf of the Imperium and things get out of hand, thereby requiring the involvement of the Imperial Navy or establishing military rule on one or more planets, the peerage and perhaps even the Emperor himself may question whether or not the noble could have done something earlier in the crisis.

Many nobles take a rather technocratic approach, using data collected by the x-boat network, high-tech surveillance equipment and reports collected from subordinate members of the peerage and the orders of knighthood. Others take a more hands-on approach to find the pulse of the worlds of their fiefs, travelling from system-to-system, intermixing with the people and relying on intuition more than impersonal computer algorithms. There is no right or wrong way to go about the business of managing the worlds of the Imperium. The proof is in the pudding. All the Emperor wants are results. How a rank noble manages their worlds is of little importance as long as the outcome is satisfactory. All that matters is the continued stability and progress of the Imperium.

THE NOBILITY OF CORE

The Core peerage includes some of the oldest families of the Imperium. Many have held their patents for centuries and some even trace their origins all the way back to the beginning of the Third Imperium. Some lay claim to patents that originated during the Sylean Federation as well but such assertions are for the most part mere braggadocio. Imperial history quite stridently insists there are no noble patents that precede Year 0 even if many of the families who received patents were power brokers in the preceding state.

There is a great deal of variation among the Core peerage. At the end of the Long Night, the sector that is now Core had two other significant pocket empires, half a dozen smaller ones and many independent worlds that had somehow found the means to survive. Such worlds invariably had leadership structures in place when the Sylean Federation, and later the Third Imperium, came knocking on their doors. When the Imperium was young, it used noble patents to bribe, cajole and diplomatically entice worlds into the Imperial fold. Promises of wealth from free trade and access to high technology was enough to get most of them on board. Barren worlds – those which had never been inhabited or at best were the site of colonies that had died out millennia ago – and dead worlds – those which had civilisations that died out during the Long Night – were distributed as fiefs to honour nobles, thereby promoting them into the rank nobility. Worlds resistant to Imperial authority were dealt with in a number of ways. Some were forcibly taken, some convinced to join via diplomacy and some given the leisure to join whenever they were ready with the caveat that the Emperor's patience was not infinite. Stragglers were also integrated into the Imperium, even if only at the bureaucratic level, and distributed as provisional fiefs. Recipients of such fiefs were often disappointed since they and their families were unable to realise any wealth from their holdings for decades if not centuries.

The Core peerage is thus a melting pot of unique dynastic traditions. The august Sylean nobles are dignified and efficient, exhibiting little of the hubris seen elsewhere. Many Vilani nobles trace their heritage all the way back to the First Imperium, a practice which – perhaps surprisingly – is encouraged by the Emperor. The nobles from the long-defunct Interstellar Confederacy are chided for their provincial accents and culture. The Chanestin nobles are the haughtiest of the bunch and look down their noses at the rest of the peerage. Nobles from Core's most powerful industrial subsectors attempt to lord it over their less well-heeled peers but are given short shrift by those with older dynastic heritage. A nouveau elite among the peerage has emerged on worlds with burgeoning economies. There are alien nobles as well with fiefs granted to a few Vargr, Bwap and Ssienjhiovla nobles, among others. The list goes on and there is a seemingly infinite amount of variation among them. The one thing they all have in common is the distinct pride that they are the primary nobility of the entire Imperium, looked upon with envy by their peers from other sectors. Despite their differences, the Core peerage is an effective bureaucratic body and manages to get along well for the most part. Those problems that do arise are typically caused by territorial disputes or patent revocations, each of which can cause a dynastic crisis.

Dynastic crises are magnets for conflict, which is anathema to an Imperium that seeks stability throughout its territory. It behoves the Emperor and the peerage to resolve such conflicts as quickly and efficiently as possible but there are often circumstances that prevent them from doing so. Vacant and suspended patents are not simply filled by the next rank noble, at least not initially. When a noble has been suspended or has had their patent revoked, the tradition is to let the patent lie fallow for a time and to give either the offending noble or their heirs time to make amends. Meanwhile, the peerage must assume responsibility for the fief. This is done by dividing territory among lesser nobles and sometimes by appointing one of them regent or custodian of the fief, a caretaker who assumes the role until the Emperor passes final judgment on what is to be done with the patent. Such times are rife with double dealing, espionage, subterfuge and other shenanigans. The Imperium may send spies to observe the dealings of the offending family. The subordinates of a revoked noble vie and jockey for position to assume the role and fief of their former superior. Proxy wars and other brushfire conflicts might even be stirred up. If things get out of hand – which they often do – the Imperial Navy is dispatched to keep things under control. However, martial law is rarely imposed. The Emperor allows the peerage to sort out its own problems to a great extent; he merely keeps a watchful eye on events to ensure the method they choose to resolve their problems do not reflect poorly on the Imperium or, more importantly, himself.

THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

The Emperor and his immediate family sit atop the noble peerage, laying claim to thousands of oaths of fealty. In 1105, Emperor Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi sits upon the Iridium Throne. He is attended by his wife, the Empress Iolanthe and daughter, the Crown Princess Ciencia Iphegenia.

Each member of the Imperial Family is dedicated to their roles as servants of the Imperium and despite divergent interests, have managed to find common ground in their respective works. The Emperor is preoccupied with the preservation and consolidation of the Imperium and has recently taken an interest in its security as well. The Empress has become an advocate for the cultural diversity of the Imperium, which on its surface would seem to be opposed to her husband's efforts to bring its people closer together. In fact, the two work quite well hand in hand, with the Emperor taking the role of wise but heavy-handed ruler when necessary, while his wife assures the cultures of the realm that all have a place in its advancement. Meanwhile, the bright Crown Princess has become the patron of the IISS, spending a great deal of her time visiting its bases, promoting its services and ensuring that the best technology and resources are made available to its personnel. Ciencia Iphegenia spends much of her time away from Capital in the Reference system, where she studies at the University of Aadkhien and works closely with the scouts' top brass.

Following the death of his father, Emperor Strephon was crowned the 43rd Emperor of the Third Imperium on 014-1071 at the tender age of 21. As the oldest child of Paulo and Elbet Alkhalikoi, Strephon was groomed for the role since birth. Being prepared to rule the most powerful human empire ever created shortly after reaching adulthood is a tall order for anyone but Strephon managed it surprisingly well, exhibiting grace and aplomb at every turn.

The first great challenge of Strephon's reign was the Fourth Frontier War. The war, conducted entirely within the confines of the Spinward Marches, was over in a mere 16 months. The Imperium made modest territorial gains, which Strephon leveraged to portray himself as a capable and victorious war-time leader. The war also marked the beginning of a long friendship between Strephon and Duke Norris of Regina. 'The war exposed the vulnerability of the Domain of Deneb. The Emperor recognises that the Imperium must be better prepared for inevitable future Frontier Wars. His reputation and standing depends upon it.

EMPEROR STREPHON AELLA ALKHALIKOI

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	Male	56

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT	10 (13)	Admin 4, Art (visual media) 2, Carouse 1, Electronics (remote ops) 1, Language (Vilani) 1, Leadership 3, Persuade 1, Pilot (small craft) 2, Science (genetics) 1, Science (history) 1, Science (robotics) 1, Seafarer (ocean ships) 1, Seafarer (sail) 1
DEX	6	EDU	11	
END	8	SOC	17	

EQUIPMENT	Advanced Desert Suit, Portable Computer/1
PERSONAL AUGMENTATION	Cognitive Augmentation (INT+3), Enhanced Vision, Neural Comm, Neural Link, Wafer Jack

The Fourth Frontier War woke Strephon up to the reality that the Imperium was becoming too broad and unwieldy. Its disparate sectors are too far apart for communication to be practical. In defiance of the Moot, Strephon re-established the domains and appointed archdukes to most of them to enhance the Imperium's abilities to respond to crises such as those seen in the Domain of Deneb whose borders with the Zhodani, Vargr and the upstart Sword Worlds were a constant source of trouble.

The Chancellor of the Moot, a strong believer in the efficacy of psychohistory, advised Strephon to take heed of Ilelish, where one revolt was put down centuries earlier and which could very well be the source of renewed unrest. In an attempt to pre-emptively address such problems, the Emperor has recently appointed one of his closest friends, Dulinor Astrin Ilethian, as Archduke of the Domain of Ilelish in an effort to forestall any problems from the highly developed and industrialised province.

Emperor Strephon travels Core and its neighbouring sectors frequently, mostly on official business. He has also recently become involved in several highly secretive enterprises, which have something to do with the security of Capital and the Imperium at large.

When he can, the Emperor likes to get away to the northern seas of Capital, the reserve world of Crompton or even the stark desolation of Onon, depending on his mood. As he has gotten older, the Emperor has found that the crown weighs upon him more heavily. The Imperium has become a difficult to manage and very complex affair and there are times that he just needs to get away to get his thoughts straight.

The Empress Iolanthe is descended from a prominent Vilani family and the daughter of the senior duke of the Gushemege sector. Iolanthe married Strephon in 1079 after a brief courtship. Their union was an arranged pairing, designed to infuse the Alkhalikoi Dynasty with some much-needed Vilani blood.

Iolanthe travels a great deal and has become an advocate for the Imperial cultural regions. Her pilgrimages thus far have taken her to the Vegan Autonomous Region, the Lancian Cultural Region,

EMPRESS IOLANTHE ALKHALIKOI

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	Female	53

TRAITS				—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT	11		Admin 3, Art (performance) 1, Athletics (dexterity) 1, Carouse 3, Language (Gvegh) 2, Leadership 2, Persuade 2, Science (psychology) 1
DEX	10	EDU	11		
END	5	SOC	17		

EQUIPMENT	Advanced Desert Suit, Portable Computer/1
PERSONAL AUGMENTATION	Cognitive Augmentation (INT+3), Enhanced Vision, Neural Comm, Neural Link, Wafer Jack

the Amec Protectorate, the League of Antares and the Luriani Cultural Association. Locally, she travels amongst the Sylean Worlds frequently, partaking in many ceremonies and festivals that celebrate Sylean heritage. While Iolanthe has no Sylean blood to speak of, as Empress of an Imperium that owes a great debt to the Syleans, she feels it is her responsibility and great honour to support and foster their culture.

The Empress has been quiet so far on whether or not she supports the notion of a Chanestin cultural region. The Chanestin worlds are a source of internecine strife in the Core, so she is careful not to stir the pot by advocating one way or the other. She does express great admiration for the historical achievements of the Chanestin people and actively engages in fund-raising activities to preserve their unique and ancient architectural monuments, some of which are now nearly 3,000 years old.

As the daughter of Emperor Strephon and Empress Iolanthe, Ciencia Iphegenia is the Grand Princess of the Imperium. As heir to the Iridium Throne, Ciencia has been educated from birth to eventually assume the mantle of authority, much like her father did before her. She shares her mother's keen intellect and has been imbued with a strong sense of duty to the Imperium by her father.

Ciencia developed a remarkable interest in the sciences early in childhood, memorising all of the constellations and component stars visible from Capital by the age of five. Her aptitudes in the realms of the space sciences have many historians likening her to her ancestor, Arbellatra Alkhalikoi, who became a naval captain at the age of 16. After graduating from the prestigious Karbiili School on Capital at the age of 10, Ciencia joined the Scout Service and completed basic training at the age of 12. She has since become the leading patron of the IISS and travels frequently to Core scout bases and their operational headquarters at Reference where she also attends courses at the University of Aadkhien. Whether or not she becomes the 'Arbellatra of the Scout Service' remains to be seen but there is ample reason to believe she will have an illustrious career with the IISS, possibly following it up with a stint at one or more of the Imperial Research Stations before she eventually sits upon the throne.

PRINCESS CIENCIA IPHEGENIA

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	Female	16

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	6	INT	12(15)	Astrogation 0, Gun Combat 0, Mechanic 0, Pilot 0, Science (astronomy) 1, Science (astrophysics) 1, Science (planetology) 1, Survival 0, Vacc Suit 0
DEX	11	EDU	9	
END	7	SOC	16	

EQUIPMENT	Imperial Raiment and Gold Tiara
PERSONAL AUGMENTATION	Cognitive Augmentation (INT+3), Neural Comm, Neural Link, Wafer Jack

IMPERIAL WARRANTS

Imperial warrants are instructions printed on physical or encrypted electronic Imperial stationery from the Emperor, an archduke or a duke and given to trusted agents of the Imperium. These instructions endow the recipient with the will of the Emperor or high nobility and supercede all other powers. Warrants typically assign a mission of great importance and are often issued in times of crisis when going through official channels is not considered to be a viable option. Emperor Strephon has been known to use Imperial Warrants on occasion, often invoking the assistance clause of Imperial Edict 97 in the process.

IMPERIAL EDICT 97

Imperial Edict 97 is the 34-page document that enables the use of Imperial warrants. Its most dramatic clause instructs the recipient to assist the bearer of an Imperial warrant with all the power that one can bring to bear.

Item	TL	Kg	Cost
Imperial Stationery	15	—	—

Used by the Imperial family to send messages, make appointments and to issue commands, Imperial stationery is presented in physical and electronic format. Its physical form is infused with subatomic particles that may be read by official scanning devices, which are extremely difficult to forge. The electronic version of the stationery is encrypted with TL15 computer technology and is equally hard to replicate. Reception of a message on Imperial stationery is akin to the spoken word of the Emperor and is considered to be a high honour.

Notable and famous correspondence on Imperial stationery has found its way into the antiquities market and many pieces are owned by private collectors, some of which are on display at various museums in Imperial space. The value of such pieces varies immensely depending on their age, the significance of events described and from whom they were issued. Some of the pieces issued by Empress Arbellatra have been sold at auction for millions of Credits.

Synthesising Imperial stationery and forging a message from the Emperor: Impossible (16+) Deception check (1D days, INT). Oppose with an Electronics (computers) check to confirm its authenticity. Note that forging Imperial stationery is a high crime punishable by death.

Corporations and Megacorporations

Doing business in the Imperium can be highly profitable. With a few aberrations, its history has been one long steady climb to wealth and prosperity. Built upon the twin pillars of free trade and self-defence, with little in the way of laws or regulations to guide the actions of individual worlds or the companies that do business on them, the environment is ideal for competition. The few regulatory agencies that do exist are there primarily to ensure that corporations do not violate Imperial law or sovereignty.

Most corporations of the Imperium are restricted to a single world or small number of worlds within a few parsecs of each other. Very successful corporations can dominate the market in a large expanse of a sector or sometimes the entire sector. Only a precious few corporations can be said to be pan-Imperial. These are known as the megacorporations.

Megacorporations are truly massive in scope, with offices, factories, research-and-development facilities and administration centres spread throughout Imperial space and often beyond its borders. Most are run like any other company, including corporate officers, boards of directors and multiple levels of management. The main difference is that these companies cover such a broad area that top executives are only responsible for strategic decisions and long-term planning with the bulk of day-to-day decisions made by regional managers who are empowered at the level of a chief executive officer at smaller corporations. The distance between branch offices and the time required for communication necessitates this level of autonomy.

Megacorporate operations are so diverse and widespread that subsidiaries may find themselves inadvertently competing with each other. Sometimes this is even desirable if doing so adversely affects a competitor in another market. Megacorporations are exorbitantly wealthy, with capital and assets distributed throughout Imperial space. Most are simply too large to be traded on a single exchange; therefore, their stock is divided into regional financial centres with overall value published on an intermittent basis, limited by the speed of interstellar communications. Data is carried in encrypted storage blocks on the x-boat network but most of the megacorporations maintain courier fleets to carry more sensitive data.

The oldest megacorporations are the three dominant Vilani bureaux: Makhidkarun, Sharurshid and Naasirka. In the Ziru Sirka era, the bureaux were responsible for the governance of vast regions of space. Naasirka governed its spinward sectors, Sharurshid the trailing sectors and Makhidkarun dominated the coreward region of the empire. The central region and various tributaries were run by a mix of the three along with smaller contenders. After the fall of the Ziru Sirka, the bureaux were gradually transformed into bona fide megacorporations, each with a massive sphere of influence and accumulated wealth.

MEGACORPORATE COURIER

CLASS: INTELL

Despite the excellent record of the x-boat network, many megacorporate officers do not trust the scouts to carry their most sensitive information. The *Intell*-class courier is designed to carry encrypted data, small prototypes and other essential capital between star systems quickly and efficiently. The design substitutes a secure vault in lieu of a cargo hold.

Megacorporate offices are spread out across Imperial space and this ship can bridge the gap quickly with its jump-5 capability. State-of-the-art virtual crew software enables the ship to operate as a drone, with no crew at all if desired. A small bridge and staterooms are provided to accommodate a skeleton crew in case corporate officers are not comfortable with an AI carrying sensitive data and cargo across multiple sectors. Eight low berths are included to ship key personnel from one megacorporate office to another or to provide a rotating 1- to 2-person crew.

The class is named for important Imperial financial centres and famous corporate events and transactions. Intell is the largest city on Capital and its primary business and financial centre.

TL15		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	200 tons, Sphere	—	8
	Emissions Absorption Grid	4	8
M-Drive	Thrust 2	4	8
J-Drive	Jump 5	30	45
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 150	10	10
Fuel Tanks	J-5, 4 weeks of operation	101	—
Bridge	Small	6	0.5
Computer	Computer/20	—	10
Sensors	Civilian	1	3
Systems	Fuel Processor (40 tons/day)	2	0.1
	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Mail Distribution Array (TL13)	20	10
	Vault	12	6
Staterooms	Standard x1	4	1
	Low Berths x8	4	0.4
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/5	—	0.5
	Library	—	—
	Virtual Crew/2	—	10
Common Areas		2	0.2
Cargo		0	—

Crew

Optional Pilot, Astrogator,Engineer

Hull: 80

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr10100/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr121.2

Power Requirements

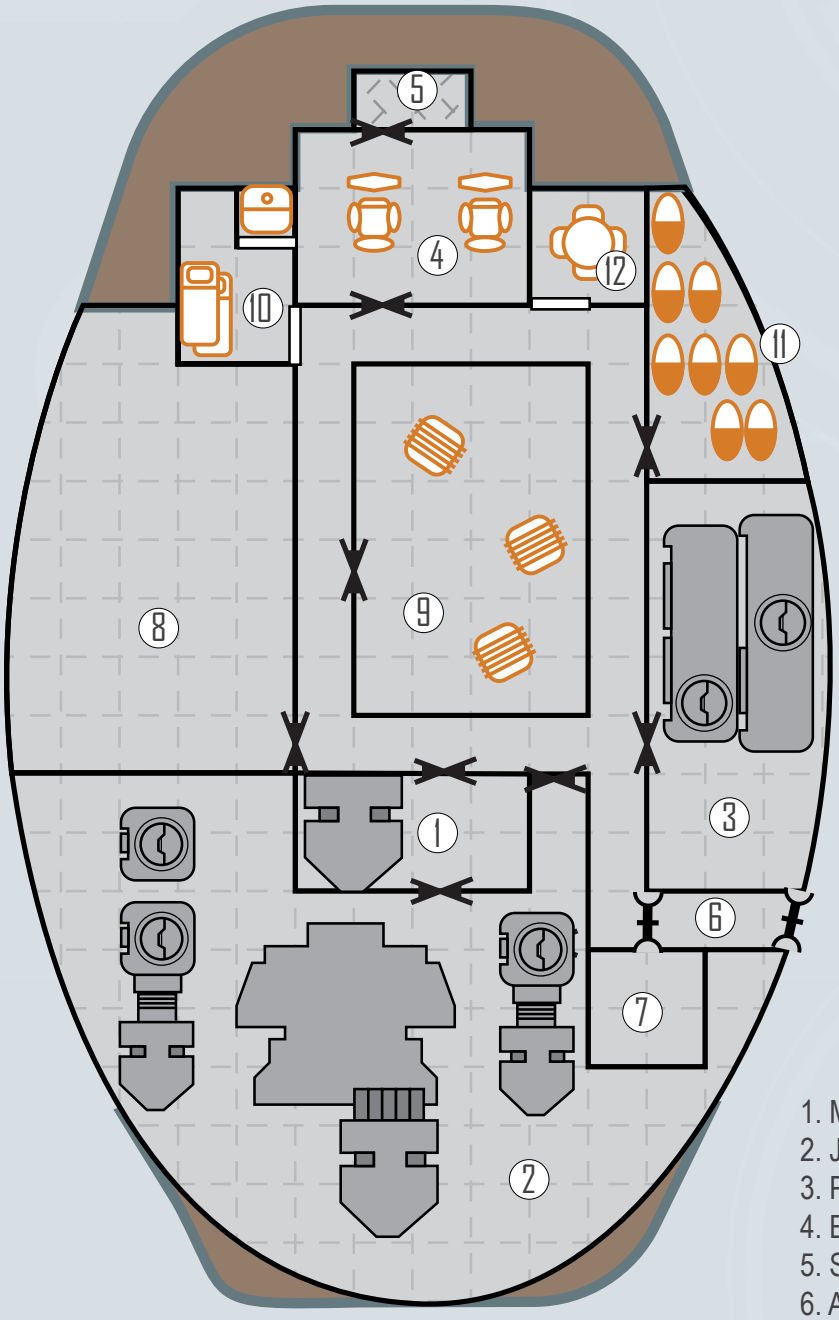
Basic Ship Systems	40
Manoeuvre Drive	40
Jump Drive	100
Sensors	1
Fuel Processor	2

* Configurable common area cost is multiplied by 1.5.

MEGACORPORATE COURIER

MEGACORPORATE COURIER

DECK 1 – FUEL DECK



DECK 2

1. M–Drive
2. J–Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Bridge
5. Sensors
6. Airlock
7. Fuel Processor
8. Mail Distribution Array
9. Vault
10. Stateroom
11. Low Berths
12. Common Area

1 SQUARE = 0.5 TONS

Megacorporation	Business
Delgado Trading, LIC	The youngest of the megacorporations, Delgado excels in several businesses, including mining, intellectual property management, antiquities trading and auctioning, and most recently the toy industry. Founded 997.
General Products, LIC	Heavy machinery, starships and small craft manufacturing of adequate quality at low prices. Built from a series of mergers in 620–622.
Gesellschaft feur Sternschiffbau AG (GSbAG)	High-end starship manufacturing. Big break came when they got the contract to build Sylean Federation Naval ships in -334. Eventually bought out Zhunastu Industries. Primary supplier of starships to the Imperial family and the Imperial Navy. Claims to have been founded in -2438.
Hortalez et Cie, LIC	Investment banking and insurance. Owns significant shares in many other megacorporations. Founded 221 by Lucienne Hortalez.
Instellarms, LIC	Manufacturer and retailer of military equipment. Primary supplier to mercenary units throughout the coreward Imperium. Founded 626 by Axel Murdoch.
Ling Standard Products	Mining, manufacture of starships, small craft, vehicles, electronics, computers, software and small arms. Minority stakes in banking, insurance and other interests. Founding date indeterminate.
Makhidkarun	Communications technology and entertainment products with a wide array of offerings at various Tech Levels. The firm maintains a less profitable but highly regarded fine foods division that specialises in fine cuisine, wines and delicacies. Founded during Ziru Sirka era.
Naasirka	Information technology, data storage, software, computers, robots and other electronic devices. Primary supplier of communications, data storage and software for the Imperial X-Boat Network. Founded during Ziru Sirka era.
Schunamann un Sohn, LIC (SuSAG)	Originally a manufacturer of psionics drugs, SuSAG branched out into pharmaceuticals, medical and surgical products, industrial chemicals, chemical and bacteriological weapons, and geneered organisms for industrial and agricultural applications. Built upon the shell of a bankrupt Sylean corporation in 252 by Gustav Schunamann.
Sharurshid	Trade and speculation. Leading exporter of rare Terran wines and spirits. Founded during Ziru Sirka era.
Sternmetal Horizons, LIC	Mining, manufacture of power-generation systems and food synthesis equipment. Founding date indeterminate.
Tukera Lines, LIC	Interstellar passenger and freight transportation along the x-boat routes. Virtual monopoly on long-distance travel in some sectors. Officially founded during the era of the Sylean Federation but Tukera family claims the firm is significantly older.
Zirunkariish	Investment banking and insurance. One of the largest underwriters in the Imperium, focusing on trusts, not other megacorporations. Founded by the Shiishuginsa family in -425. Antiama Shiishuginsa married Emperor Zhakirov in 679, establishing ties between the Imperial family and the megacorporation.

History of the Third Imperium

The Third Imperium is the self-appointed successor of two previous empires that existed thousands of years ago. The first of these was the Vilani Grand Empire of the Stars or Ziru Sirka as they called it in their native language. With their homeworld and capital at Vland, the Ziru Sirka became the largest interstellar empire in history. The Vilani were descended from humans who were originally taken from Terra approximately 300,000 years ago by an alien race who are now called the Ancients. The Ancients mysteriously disappeared from the galactic scene but the Vilani lived on and discovered jump drive technology in -9235, nearly seven millennia before their Terran counterparts. They engaged in a long, largely unopposed expansion into the stars, first exploring and trading, and then consolidating and conquering the sophonts they encountered. Vilani culture adhered to a strict caste system that focused on tradition, conservatism and the cautious use of technology. The Ziru Sirka reached its apex in approximately -3500 when it was composed of 15,000 star systems spread across 27 sectors of space.

After thousands of years, the Vilani had begun to struggle with the management of their vast empire and it was in decline by -3000. They had divided it among agencies called Bureaux, each of which promulgated the Vilani caste system and methods of government. The fact that the Vilani had only achieved jump-2 technology meant that travel and communication was slow and ponderous. By -2500 the Vilani could no longer secure their frontier from the barbarian states beyond their borders, including the Vargr to coreward and the Terrans to rimward. They first encountered Terran explorers in -2422 at a remote mining outpost on Barnard, a mere two parsecs from Terra. The first meetings between the Vilani and Terrans were peaceful. The Vilani had already encountered and integrated many human Minor Races during the expansion of their empire and they assumed the Terrans were simply another such race. However, first contact was a monumental affair for the Terrans, who had never encountered extra-terrestrial life before and were especially shocked when they encountered other humans with subtle physical differences.

A mere 23 years after the first meeting between the Terrans and Vilani, the first of a series of wars broke out between them that became known as the Interstellar Wars. After realising the massive size and industrial base of their enemy, the Terrans engaged in a programme of technological development and population expansion. Despite the immensity and breadth of the Vilani Imperium, the Terrans soon discovered that they faced a decaying empire, one with little hope of standing up to a motivated, rapidly advancing opponent. Unlike the Vilani, the Terrans had no qualms about technology. In fact, it became an existential imperative for the Terrans to advance as quickly as possible in order to oppose the massive Vilani Imperium.

The Interstellar Wars were a mixed affair. The Terrans encountered pockets of strong resistance as they branched out into Vilani territory but they also discovered just how decayed and unstable the Ziru Sirka had become, especially on its rimward frontier. Many Vilani worlds willingly submitted to Terran authority; some were even eager to join them. Others looked upon the Terrans as interlopers or invaders but were not given sufficient resources by the central government to fight back against Terran aggression. The Terrans worked their way through Vilani space, fighting when they had to and annexing worlds when they did not. After 200 years, the depleted Ziru Sirka surrendered to the Terrans and the Second Imperium was born. The Terrans referred to this empire as The Rule of Man.

The Terrans were accustomed to democratic government but it soon became clear that they would have to change their thinking when it came to the administration of a widespread interstellar empire. The commander-in-chief of Terran military forces, Admiral Hiroshi Estigarribia, broke with Terran High Command and took personal control of the Empire. Rather than letting it be run from Terra with all its politics and rivalries, Hiroshi moved the capital to Hub (now called Kaggushus) in the Massilia sector. When announcing this to the empire in a speech in High Vilani, Hiroshi introduced himself and his people for the first time as the 'Solomani'. After 200 years of expansion, the invaders were no longer strictly 'Terran' anymore. Generations had been born on conquered and colonised worlds. Many were newly made clones or the descendants of clones who had been mass produced in an effort to achieve greater parity with the Vilani. The Terrans had also uplifted many species native to their homeworld in a desperate effort to fill vacant roles in their military and on their starships. The word 'Solomani' reflected their origin in the Sol system but was inclusive of those who had not been born on Terra itself. Although Hiroshi never declared himself Emperor, his son accepted the title and was crowned Emperor Hiroshi II, posthumously declaring his father to have been Hiroshi I.

The Rule of Man was a tumultuous time. The Terran Navy had spread out far and wide to absorb the entirety of the Ziru Sirka. While officers of flag rank were tasked with governing the most prestigious worlds, junior officers were often left in charge of backwaters and remote outposts. The Terrans and Vilani began to intermix and new societies developed that featured elements of both cultures. Over the course of their expansion, the Solomani came into contact with numerous human subspecies, all of whom had also been transplanted to various worlds by the Ancients. They adopted the collective name Humaniti to encompass all human races that had been found.

The Vilani managed their empire through ancient and established tradition, and the arrival of the Solomani with their new ideas and concepts of personal freedom destroyed those traditions. Without that reliance on the old ways, the Solomani had no ability to manage such an enormous empire and the Rule of Man collapsed in less than five centuries, a mere blink of an eye in the long history of Humaniti. Historians cite -1776 as the beginning of the end when the Central Treasury on Hub refused to honour a monetary issue from the branch treasury of Antares. This caused a general collapse of the financial system and the government's ability to make or control policy. The last claimant to the throne of the Rule of Man made their capital on Sylea in the Core sector.

The onset of what became known as the Long Night brought about a decline in interstellar trade, diplomacy and communication. This resulted in a sharp decline in technology on many worlds and populations that could not be maintained without a constant flow of supplies either emigrated to worlds that could sustain them or simply died off. Solitary worlds and small polities of a few worlds were scattered throughout Charted Space with huge expanses of barren star systems between them. Most worlds lost the capacity to build jump drives and became isolated islands in the vast reaches of space. Citizens of many worlds lived their entire lives without the ability to reach out to neighbouring stars, some of which were only a parsec away. The Long Night was also a dangerous time. Pirates and reavers roamed space, preying upon defenceless worlds and attacking the few remaining starships that dared to travel between the stars. Over a 1,000 years passed before the lights of interstellar civilisation began to re-emerge. The brightest of these lights shone on Sylea, the world that was the last vestige of the previous empire. Even as darkness descended, Sylea had established itself as the last world of the Rule of Man. When the curtain finally began to lift, it was Sylea that once again led the way.

THE THREE IMPERIUMS

In reality, there has only ever been a *Third* Imperium. Its predecessors, the Ziru Sirka and Rule of Man were never referred to as 'imperiums' during the eras in which they existed but using the terms First, Second and Third Imperium simplifies the terminology and makes for a convenient narrative.

The First Imperium was the Ziru Sirka or 'Grand Empire of the Stars' of the Vilani. After the Terrans defeated the Vilani in the Interstellar Wars, the victorious successor state has been given several names over the course of history. Terran Admiral Hiroshi Estigarribia declared it to be the Rule of Man, which was meant to emphasise the common heritage of Humaniti whether they be of Solomani, Vilani or other origin. Many academics still use the term since it is indeed the title that the conquerors gave to themselves, adding validity to the old adage that 'History is told by the victors'.

Over time, this term was politicised and Rule of Man became the Solomani-supremacist name of choice. Extremists among them attempted to instil a revisionist history in which the name was not in fact intended to establish unity between the various human subspecies but to convey the superiority of the conquerors. There have been rallies and demonstrations in Solomani space that rather unrealistically clamour for the reinstatement of the Rule of Man based on specious arguments that the Solomani-dominated state was never officially dissolved.

The disparaging term Ramshackle Empire was invented during the Long Night, replacing the Rule of Man for those who blamed the empire for ushering in the fall of interstellar civilisation. For those who wish neither to celebrate nor denigrate the short-lived human empire, the neutral term Second Imperium was adopted in reference to the fact that it was the successor to the nominal First Imperium.

In more recent centuries, Solomani rabble rousing has caused an academic schism of sorts, resulting in the adoption of Ramshackle Empire as the go-to for many academics in Imperial space. While this derisive term does little to fully convey the events that occurred during the pre-Long Night era, it does get the point across that Solomani rule was often authoritarian and unwelcome. History has not shined a kind light on this brief era and usage of the term Ramshackle Empire has gained steam as a result. In modern times one finds all three terms used, often resulting in heated debate.

A Brief Timeline of Imperial History

Year	Event
-650	Sylean Federation founded.
-495	Vland recontacted.
-30	Felix Zhunastu dies. Cleon assumes his father's political and industrial leadership roles at the age of 27.
0	Third Imperium founded.
76–120	Pacification Campaigns.
114	Solomani Hypothesis published in the Imperium.
175–191	Julian War.
210–348	Vargr Campaigns.
245	Right of Assassination invented. Empress Porfiria assumes the throne.
300	First Grand Survey begins.
418–435	Ilelish Revolt.
475	Non-Dynastic Era begins.
589–604	First Frontier War.
604–622	Civil War. Ends when Arbellatra is crowned as Regent.
615–620	Second Frontier War.
629	Arbellatra crowned Empress, beginning the Alkhalikoi Dynasty.
718	Imperial X-boat Network expanded to cover all of Imperial space.
800–826	Psionic Suppressions.
979–986	Third Frontier War.
990–1002	Solomani Rim War.
1065	Second Grand Survey begins.
1071	Strephon crowned Emperor, continuing the Alkhalikoi Line.

THE SYLEAN FEDERATION

The Long Night was a long and grievous affair that marked the end of large-scale interstellar civilisation, the complete breakdown of communication between star systems and a descent into barbarism. Charted Space became a lawless place where pirates and reavers roamed and took what they wanted without consequences. Despite the darkness of the era, civilisation managed to eke out a perilous existence, first on thousands of isolated worlds and eventually among dozens of 'pocket empires', small collections of worlds that had somehow managed to maintain – or, in some cases, reobtain – jump drive technology, enabling them to establish tenuous links between each other. These pocket empires were a shadow of the great empires of the past but nonetheless managed to keep the fragile flame of interstellar civilisation alive.

In the Core sector, there were three prominent pocket empires, several smaller ones and scores of isolated worlds that had managed to survive. The three dominant polities of the sector were the Sylean Federation, the Interstellar Confederacy and the Chanestin Kingdom. Of the three, the Syleans were the most ambitious, the ones who had plans to restore the greatness of Humaniti.

When the Long Night descended upon Sylea, the world had an eclectic mix of ethnicities. Sylea was one of many worlds in Charted Space to host a human Minor Race (for more about the Syleans, see Sylean Travellers on page 171). Vilani colonists had settled and intermixed with the Syleans starting in approximately -9100. The Syleans were largely ignored and marginalised by the Vilani. After thousands of years of intermixing, there were few pureblood Syleans remaining but some isolated communities had maintained complete genetic purity. Vilani culture had come to dominate the world and oppress its indigenous population during the era of the Ziru Sirka but Syleans still engaged in traditional cultural activities and practiced their own religions, often in secret. The arrival of the Solomani during the Rule of Man heralded a revival of Sylean culture. The Solomani elevated Syleans to positions of power on their homeworld after thousands of years of oppression. Unbeknownst to the Solomani, this would pave the way for great things to come. After the Long Night began, the revival of Sylean culture took many centuries to fully flower but eventually became a key component in the rise of the Sylean Federation and its successor state, the Third Imperium.

By -900, Sylea was one of a handful of worlds that had regained some semblance of pre-Long Night technology. The Syleans had reacquired fusion power and ascended to TL9. With a small number of starships, they began to reach out to star systems around them in an effort to restore diplomatic relations, communication and most importantly, trade. Sylea was run by a majority-Solomani monarchy during much of the Long Night, but by -650 the people threw off the yoke of authoritarian rule. Under pressure from its feudal nobility, Queen Rowena abdicated the throne. The monarchy was replaced by the Sylean Grand Senate and a president in the executive role.

Sylean scouts began to travel to a growing circle of star systems. By -500, the Sylean Federation had come to include 18 systems. After much debate, the Grand Senate determined it was time to reach out to other pocket empires as well. Dozens of expeditions were formed, the most ambitious of which made it to far-off Vland in -495. Vland had also begun to travel to neighbouring systems and did not take kindly to the Sylean intruders, initially expelling them from Vilani space. Undeterred, the Syleans sent more missions to Vland and, with careful diplomacy, established a trade corridor with the Vilani in -480. Travel between Sylea and Vland was perilous during this era. The route was riddled with craven pirates, dead worlds and xenophobic remnant civilisations. Even so, it gave the Syleans confidence that they might one day rebuild some semblance of interstellar civilisation.

As the Sylean Federation grew, senators from frontier worlds pressed for continued expansion. These worlds enjoyed the benefits of being members of the Federation but were exposed to the dangers of uncivilised space just beyond its borders. In -384, this caused a rift in the Grand Senate, creating two factions: the Democrats and the Expansionists. The former wanted to preserve and cultivate what Sylea had created thus far and the latter wanted to continue to build upon it, expanding ever outward to worlds with which contact had been lost during the Long Night. By the mid -350s a third faction developed: the Industrialists, who sought a more equitable distribution of the Federation's growing wealth. Things were changing rapidly and the Grand Senate and its president struggled to keep up with the pace.

Up to this point, Sylean scout and naval fleets were a ragtag bunch of starships, cobbled together by fledgling manufacturing firms. The ship-building firm Gesellschaft feur Sternschiffbau AG – abbreviated as GSbAG or 'Gas Bag' as it is popularly known – was financed by a group of wealthy senators and quickly rose to the top of the ship construction industry. GSbAG's contract to build Federation Navy ships in -334 cemented its position, making it a near monopoly.

Sylea's rapidly advancing industrial concerns carried them to Tech Level 11. Its starships acquired jump-2 capability, extending the Federation's reach. Sylean scouts discovered that their growing empire was not alone in the Core sector when they visited the Heraldia system in -301 and encountered ships from the Interstellar Confederacy. The Syleans desperately wanted access to the spinward trade routes, but the Interstellar Confederacy was not prepared to willingly give them up or share them. The two empires engaged in occasional skirmishes and wars for three centuries before the Confederacy ultimately fell to Sylean forces.

THE INTERSTELLAR CONFEDERACY

In the Bunkeria and Cemplas subsectors of Core, there were a string of worlds known collectively as the Great Spiral that managed to survive the Long Night relatively intact. Not every world along this string had made it through unscathed but over time, outposts and small starports were built on 'gap worlds' so that eventually they had a serviceable jump-1 main established.

In -684, a politician from Sketola by the name of Rom Debeshuut united the worlds of the Great Spiral into the Interstellar Confederacy. The primary goal of this union was to restore interstellar trade, provide for mutual self-defence and preserve the technology of the four or five systems that had achieved TL12. The leaders of the Interstellar Confederacy 'met as equals' in a Grand Senate on Sketola.

In -623, after expanding to 32 star systems, the Interstellar Confederacy abruptly stopped accepting new members. The senators determined this was the maximum number that they could manage and that taking on more systems would have a deleterious effect on their ability to retain the Tech Levels that they had so assiduously built.

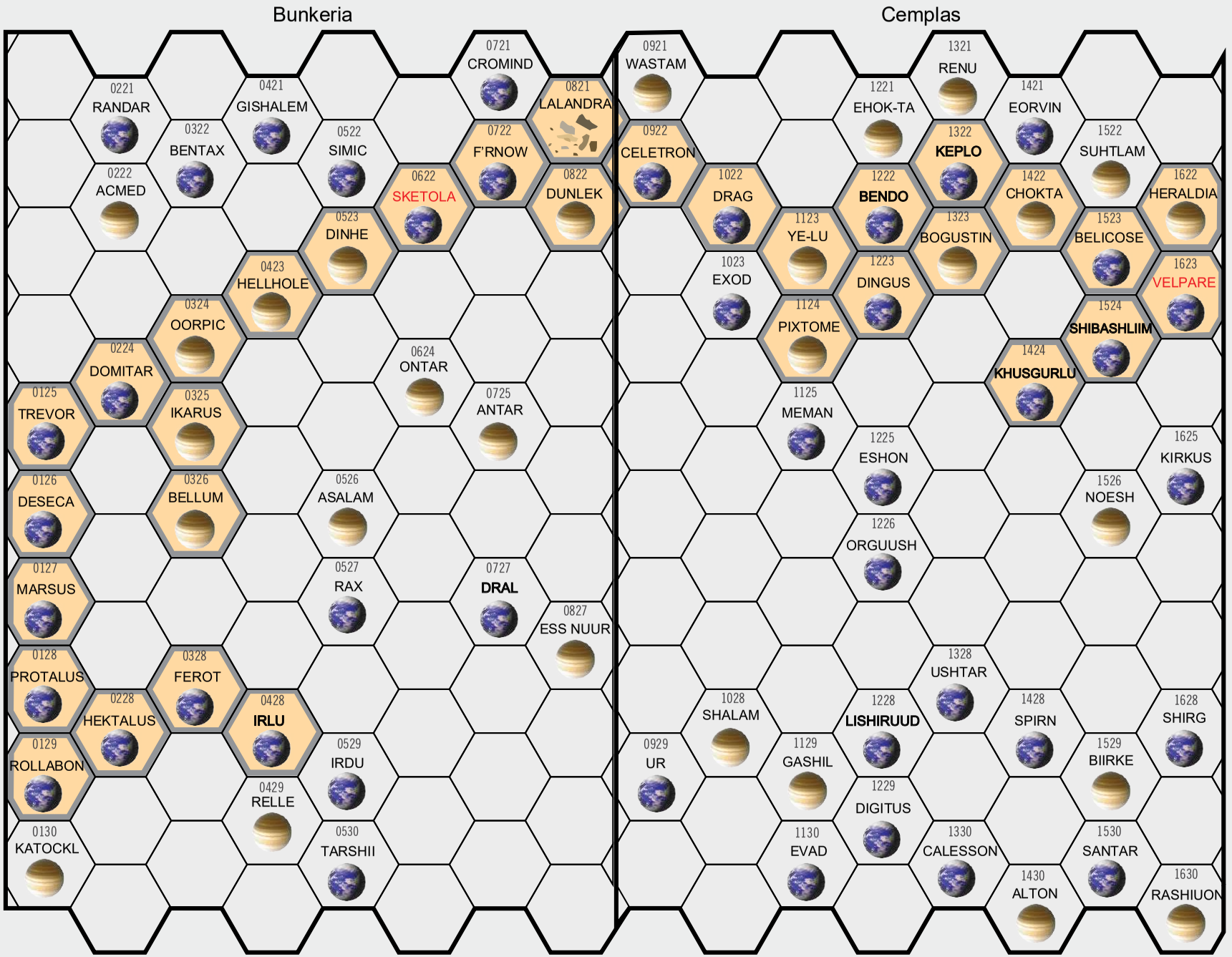
The Interstellar Confederacy first encountered scouts from the Sylean Federation in -301. Relations started poorly and the two quickly became enemies. Initially, the conflicts between them were limited to commerce raiding but by -260, they engaged in open war. In one of the war's more famous battles, a Sylean naval squadron routed the Confederacy Navy at Velpare in -258 but failed to occupy the planet after an ill-advised and poorly executed siege. The Confederacy was humbled by the defeat but the inability of the Syleans to take the world itself prevented them from gaining a strong foothold in the region.

In -239 the Confederacy suffered a civil war. Rebel forces from its spinward arm conquered the capital at Sketola and held it for two years before loyalists were able to take it back. They tried to recover from this self-inflicted wound but the damage was done. A broken and demoralised Confederacy faced a rapidly expanding Sylean Federation. The Confederacy was ultimately done in by internal divisions and an unwillingness to expand its membership when it had the opportunity to do so.

Loyalist forces resisted the Syleans for another century but it became a matter of when, not if, the Confederacy would eventually collapse. Intense battles were fought on Velpare and Heraldia in -201 but after both fell to the Syleans, resistance crumbled on many more of their worlds in the following decades. By -100, the Sylean Federation had acquired all the systems to trailing of Ye-lu. Finally, in the year -1, the exhausted forces of the remaining Confederacy worlds surrendered to the Sylean Federation. That it took almost another century after the fall of Velpare for the Confederacy to completely collapse is a testament to its then superior technology and the obstinacy of its worlds.

The artefacts and culture of the Interstellar Confederacy live on in current times. The former Confederacy worlds of Bunkeria and Cemplas proudly celebrate their history and its famous personalities. Perhaps the greatest living remnant of the Confederacy is the Achenaar Antilles Line, a merchant firm founded on F'rnow in -567 by Rualto Achenaar and Jofan Antilles. In modern times, the corporation remains a highly successful sector-wide line, which has fared well against larger competitors.

THE INTERSTELLAR CONFEDERACY



THE CHANESTIN KINGDOM

When the Long Night fell, travel between star systems came to a halt throughout most of civilised space. Many worlds died out if they could not sustain themselves without the benefit of interstellar trade. Self-sufficient worlds were often able to survive. With its placid K-type main sequence primary star, standard atmosphere and bountiful resources, Keshi was one such place.

Keshi was a rich agricultural world during the era of the Ziru Sirka and was heavily colonised by the Solomani after the Interstellar Wars. After the Rule of Man collapsed, Keshi retained a fleet of starships and huge stockpiles of materiel, which helped it to fare better than its neighbours. In the year -1300, Keshi was ruled by King Brzeszcze, who used his aging fleet of starships to conquer the systems around him. After several generations, the Chanestin Kingdom had amassed an empire of 25 worlds, all of which were within five parsecs of Keshi. Once conquered, these worlds were not excessively oppressed unless they resisted the authority of the King.

Even as it grew increasingly incapable of maintaining its fleet of starships, the Chanestin Kingdom managed to govern its empire for over 1,000 years before being contacted by outsiders. Unlike the Interstellar Confederacy, the Chanestin people were not plagued by divisiveness but likewise they were not blessed with the Confederacy's advanced technology.

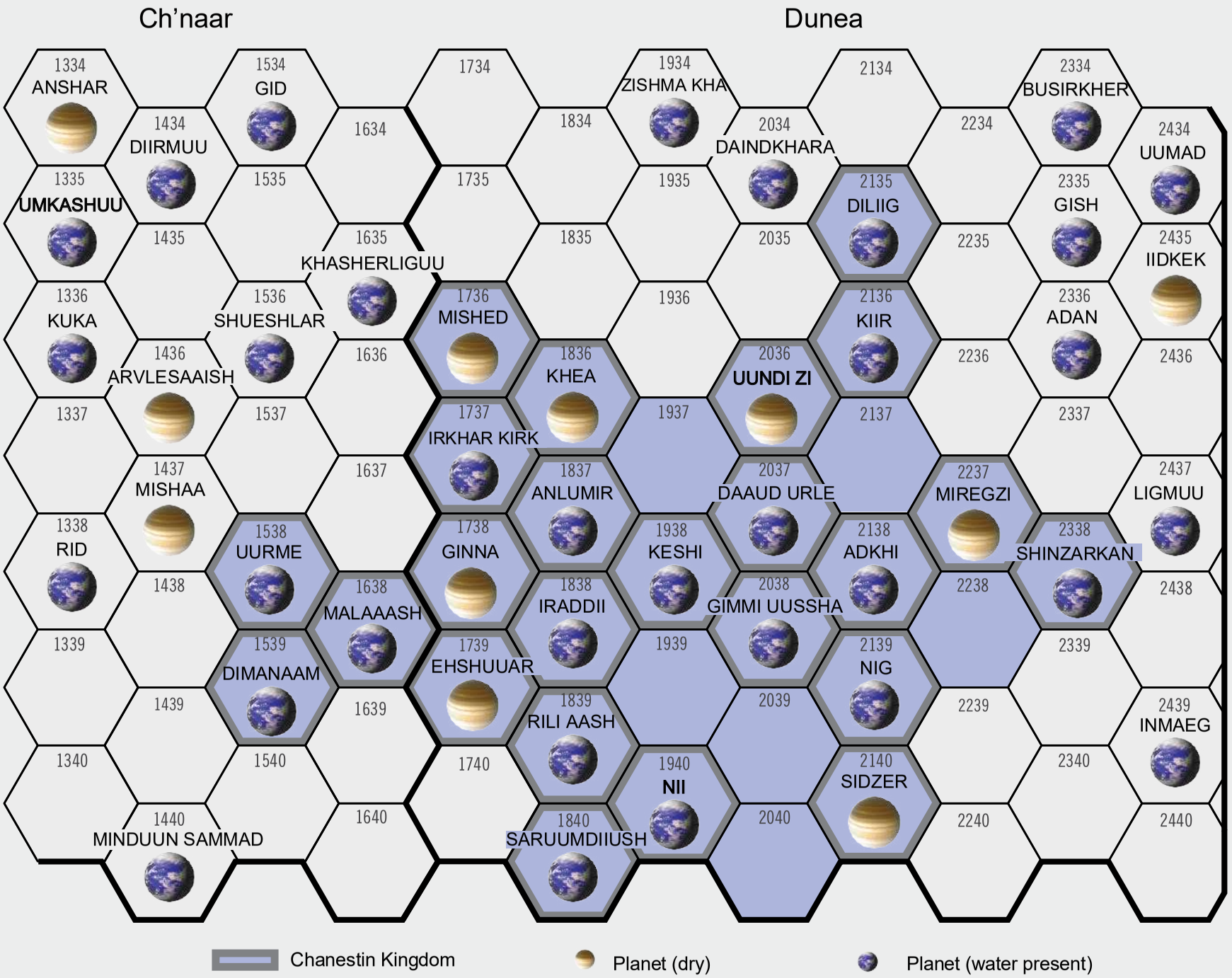
The Sylean Federation established contact with Chanestin Kingdom border worlds in -108 and followed up by sending a flotilla of merchant ships in -107 to establish trade ties. The ruling monarch, Queen Nayarit, accepted the cargoes that the merchants brought with them but had the entire expedition executed for inciting its people with seditious ideas. The Sylean Federation responded by sending warships and a war broke out between the two polities that lasted nearly a century.

By the time the Syleans had contacted them, the highest available technology on the Chanestin worlds was TL9 and they had been reduced to a single operating jump-capable starship. Unfortunately for the Syleans, they had inadvertently given the Chanestin the tools needed to revive their ailing navy. The Chanestin kept the starships of the merchants whom they had executed, armed the stolen ships and put them into service as their own. They also reverse engineered the technology to begin the arduous task of building a new fleet of warships. The Chanestin Kingdom recognised the Sylean Federation for the existential threat that it was and invested every iota of their energy into the preservation of their millennium-old empire. Within a few short years, they had the makings of a fleet and went on the offensive against the Syleans.

After exhausting themselves in a war that lasted 63 years, the two sides signed an armistice in -44 to prevent further bloodshed but by -25, the Kingdom realised that their technology was becoming increasingly inferior to that of the Syleans and they grew desperate. Chanestin naval forces launched a series of deep attacks into Sylean space, including one that made it all the way to Shudushaam. In -3, the Sylean Federation had resolved to call upon its full military might in the conflict and finally defeated the Chanestin Kingdom two years after the declaration of the Third Imperium.

The feudal structure of the Chanestin Kingdom was nullified and cooperative members of its nobility were offered Imperial noble patents to placate them. The once-proud Kingdom was integrated into the Imperium and so began a painful, centuries-long period of cultural and economic decline for their once-proud worlds.

HISTORICAL MAP OF THE CHANESTIN KINGDOM



While the conflict with the Interstellar Confederacy might best have been described as a war of attrition, the war with the Chanestin Kingdom presented a very different challenge for the Syleans. The Chanestin were much more unified. The Syleans learned valuable lessons in both conflicts, which would fuel their later military endeavours.

Despite the problems encountered in the Core, the Sylean Federation did not stand by idly patrolling their own sector during this era. Federation scouts were sent in all directions to re-establish contact with other worlds and pocket empires that had weathered the Long Night. During the last century of Federation rule, its scouts had extended Sylea's reach 30–40 parsecs in all directions. The corridor to Vland, now called the Annililik Run, was a long and dangerous route, used by only the boldest of traders. Piracy plagued all of the major trade routes, a problem which would soon expose the Sylean Federation's weaknesses.

While it had yet to develop a supporting bureaucracy or official structure, the prototype of the modern scout service began to surface in approximately -100; previously, most scouting was performed by freelancers and entrepreneurial ventures. Scout crews were given contracts by the Federation government and various corporations for the information they obtained.

Some crews focused strictly on data collection; surveying territory, updating maps and recontacting lost civilisations. Others worked the commercial side, seeking natural resources to exploit, trade partners for Sylean corporations and scoping out future industrial sites. The two sides would not come together until a few decades later in -29 when President Cleon Zhunastu declared the formation of the Sylean Federation Scout Service (SFSS). The service was divided into four branches: Administration, Technical Services, Operations and Exploration. The SFSS was the precursor of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service, which was formed in year 0 of the Third Imperium.

The SFSS had a short tenure before being replaced by the IISS but the timing could not have been better for its replacement. The marriage of exploratory and mercantile services was not a happy one. The SFSS was plagued by corruption and scandal for most of its three decades. Too many special interests had gotten involved in the planning of missions. Far too often the data and security needs of the Federation took a back seat to the desires of corporations with deep pockets. Missions of a purely exploratory nature were postponed if there were possible trade ties to be had in a different region. When the IISS was formed, commercial interests were struck from the Scout Service's list of responsibilities and handed over to individual corporations.

THE DAY THEY ARRIVED

When the first ship appeared in the sky, the people of Port Khanuum could tell there was something different about it. Our world, Kirbarus, had been raided by pirates from somewhere in Massilia many times but the fishermen setting sail could tell at first glance that this was no pirate ship. It was sleek, colourful, well-maintained and shiny. Pirate ships were always barely holding up, with their dull, scarred hulls and engines sputtering as they came in to exact their toll from us. With few defensive weapons of our own, the laser turrets on a pirate ship could be applied with devastating results like lightning bolts hurled down upon us from a spiteful god.

No, this ship was different. It landed on the flat plains just outside the city near the marsh, taking care to avoid damaging crops in the fields. The crew wore uniforms and came out unarmed, filter masks protecting them from our atmospheric taint. They walked the two kilometres from the field to the town centre where they asked to speak to Port Khanuum's leaders. They brought gifts with them: portable fusion power cells that could provide enough energy for an entire province. We had returned to using fossil fuels with a few nuclear fission plants on the coast of the southern continent. Only in textbooks did our young students learn about a forgotten age of fusion power and the spacecraft that once connected worlds with their ability to jump from star-to-star. We were among the lucky worlds with a semi-breathable atmosphere, genetically engineered crops and enough people to work the land. Most of our resources were applied to filtering out contaminants in our water and eliminating pests that threatened our crops.

Before too long we were reunited with the star systems around us, our agricultural goods shipped from world-to-world, helping to revive struggling populations and resurrecting those whose colonies had completely died out after the Rule of Man ended. The profits we made from selling produce and other wares were used to purchase freighters of our own. We felt like we were waking up from a 1,000-year-long dream. Soon we proudly called ourselves members of the Sylean Federation. Our world was forever changed the day they arrived.

CLEON ZHUNASTU

As the Federation extended its reach to 30 or so parsecs in all directions from Sylea, acquiring an increasing number of member systems, the strain of interstellar government began to show. Just as it was for the Federation's much larger predecessors, it was becoming clear that centralised governments were poor at managing large expanses of space. The limiting factor was the reach of the jump drive, just as it had always been. Information was limited to the speed of jump, which made it impossible to govern from any distance beyond a few parsecs.

The Sylean Federation had achieved a uniform TL11 and its industries were rapidly pushing towards TL12. Jump-2 was the standard for Sylean military ships with a smattering of jump-3 prototype spacecraft in operation. Decisions made by the Grand Senate were carried by fast couriers but by the time their instructions reached the frontier, circumstances had often changed. This made dealing with the piracy crisis increasingly difficult. The Federation was built upon the concept of establishing free trade between member worlds but rampant piracy threatened to destroy everything they had built. The Federation had built an impressive navy but there simply were not enough squadrons to defend worlds that were more than a few parsecs from Sylea. Arguments between the Democrats and Expansionists paralysed the Grand Senate. Several presidents were deposed for their failure to handle the problem. It was clear that something had to be done but no one in a position of leadership was willing to make big changes until Cleon Zhunastu came along.

Cleon was born to a noble father, Grand Duke Felix Zhunastu of Sylea and his Vilani consort, Denkhumi. The Zhunastu family were exorbitantly wealthy, having achieved great success in the fields of energy production and spacecraft manufacturing. Cleon's Uncle Aldin was an ingenious engineer in the field of fusion energy systems. Fusion power plants had existed before the Long Night but most worlds had lost the ability to manufacture them. Aldin's patented designs improved upon existing fusion technology and were implemented in a line of products called Fusion Plus (F+). F+ plants were small, tidy and energy efficient, easily transportable for sale and installation in distant star systems.

As the Grand Duke of Sylea, Felix Zhunastu dreamed that the Sylean Federation would one day become an enormous trade empire, one which would create wealth for all of its citizens. Felix's hands were tied by politics during his reign but he could foresee a time when that would change. He groomed Cleon to be ready for that day and set plans in motion that would ensure his legacy. Felix manipulated the Grand Senate to grant the president broad and expansive powers and used the Zhunastu family fortune to acquire several key corporations that he merged into a single corporate entity: Zhunastu Industries.

SECRETS OF THE ZHUNASTU DYNASTY

The ageless story of the Zhunastu dynasty has transcended into the realm of myth. There is little doubt that the family was a talented bunch but some aspects of their story are shrouded in mystery.

They became the masters of the Sylean Federation, yet had little if any Sylean blood in their heritage. They used technology to overcome their rivals, yet for a time they were not even the most technologically advanced empire in their own sector. The Zhunastus had an uncanny ability to overcome every obstacle in their path with a clear and methodical approach. They were undeterred by setbacks and always seemed prepared with a contingency plan when things went awry. Many historians believe that they used two tools to overcome challenges that got in their way: psychohistory and psionics.

Felix Zhunastu had long been a disciple of psychohistory, the use of mathematics to predict the mass movements and future history of Humaniti. The larger the sampling, the better psychohistory works, or so goes the conventional wisdom. Vilani psychohistorians predicted the long, drawn-out fall of the Ziru Sirka. Solomani psychohistorians saw the demise of the Rule of Man coming like a high-speed freight train. These were enormous empires with populations in the trillions. The Sylean Federation was a tiny polity in comparison, yet its leaders increasingly leaned on psychohistory as their empire grew in size and population. This was at least one of the reasons for the Syleans' eagerness to reunite with Vland. By reconnecting with the capital of the old empire, the Syleans increased their sample size immensely, making psychohistorical predictions much more accurate. By the time Cleon took the role of Grand Duke upon his father's death, the Federation and its allies had achieved a certain critical mass, providing an increasing level of clarity and accuracy in their psychohistorical predictions.

While there is no direct proof, most believe that the Zhunastus also employed psions in key roles of their political and corporate organisations. There is little reason to believe the Zhunastus themselves had psionic talent but both Sylea and Rhylea (then called Udmum) hosted reputable psionic clubs and university programmes. The top psionic talents of the era were recruited by the noble families to serve as aides and spies. There were laws preventing unlawful telepathic and clairvoyant intrusion, which necessitated the development of counter-psionics: psions trained to detect and prosecute violations. Psionics gave the nobility and corporate community unprecedented advantages over their competition. Rumour has it that the Zhunastus even had a precog on their payroll, a rare talent indeed.

In -32 Cleon returned from a long journey during which he had visited Antares, Amdukan and finally Vland, where he stayed for over a year to study at the Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin (AAB), the Vilani 'repository of all knowledge'. In a public statement, Cleon expressed admiration for the world's history and customs. While studying at the AAB, he published a dissertation: 'The Vilani Imperative: Lessons of the Shudusham Concords'. Within the Core sector in the year -112, terrorists detonated a bomb on a courier robot that killed the premier of Fornol and several Sylean nobles while aboard the *Empire's Banner*, a Sylean warship. The incident nearly caused a civil war. Cleon's scholarly paper hypothesised that the Shudusham Concords, which limited the use of weaponry on robots, were evidence of the enduring Vilani legacy in the modern Core. Cautious and limited use of technology were tenets of Vilani philosophy and Cleon won his hosts over with a spirited statement of their shared heritage.

Felix Zhunastu died in -30, leaving a young but wise-beyond-his-years Cleon as his heir. Cleon assumed the mantle of Grand Duke, president of the Grand Senate and chairman of Zhunastu Industries at the tender age of 27. He did not waste time making his mark.

Cleon kept a close eye on the family business but appointed his Uncle Aldin as chief executive officer to perform the day-to-day management of the company. During Cleon's first year as president of the Grand Senate, the Syleans began to actively recruit more worlds to the Federation. The recruitment drive was anchored by Vland, which committed its worlds. Stronger diplomatic and trade ties between Sylea and Vland had been developing for centuries and Cleon's presence and scholarly work at the AAB was the decisive factor in the Vilani decision to join. In a public statement on Sylea, Cleon expressed his gratitude for their trust and vowed to leave Vilani social institutions intact. The union of the Sylean and Vilani polities was a coup of major proportions. It conveyed the inevitability of the growing Sylean trade federation, served as a valuable recruiting tool and gave the citizens of the Federation the sense that they were a part of something much bigger than themselves.

Not content to sit on his laurels, Cleon became the renaissance man of his times, engaging in politics, business and diplomacy with equal verve. One of his first acts was to reform the Scout Service. While the agency had been one of the linchpins of the expansion effort, noble and corporate influence had corrupted it. Instead of extending the reach of the Federation, it had become a tool of the wealthy. High-ranking nobles and business leaders were effectively selecting the Scout Service's missions and sanctioning only those which served their narrow business interests. While developing trade routes was certainly a key goal, Cleon felt that the Scout Service must be focused on survey and exploration for their own sake and set up a bureaucracy to give the agency independence. This would be the first of many reforms that helped the Scout Service become the institution that it is in modern times.

A big test for the growing Sylean Federation was solving the piracy crisis. Piracy had become an epidemic, hindering the growth of the Federation and threatening its membership drive. Zhunastu Industries built a squadron of light carriers and sublight gunships, fitted them with F+ plants and sent them to the frontier. They struck a major blow at the Azimuth system where they destroyed a particularly notorious pirate. While the destruction of one pirate ship did not end the crisis, it was a major public relations victory for the Federation. It gave the frontier worlds the confidence that the Federation was going to help them.

Cleon's actions during the pre-Imperial era were often maddening to his peers. One week he would be working on diplomatic relations with the monarch of Adguu Uun, the next he would be off to Nimluin to be present for Zhunastu Industries' latest factory opening and then back to Capital to discuss the future of the Federation. Historical records of the era make him appear to be a madman but when one steps back to look at the big picture, it was almost as if Cleon already knew what would happen in the year 0, the year that the Third Imperium was founded.

Obviously, Cleon was just one man and there was only so much he could do. Over time, he learned to delegate authority to women and men whom he deemed trustworthy, dutiful and honourable, characteristics that he looked for in others throughout his life. Cleon had a vision that he was striving towards with single-minded focus and sought others who shared his dream to build a great and lasting empire.

YEAR 0

Cleon spent the last years of the Sylean Federation building and consolidating power. He established allegiances with trusted corporate executives and members of the nobility. The SFSS continued to extend the Federation's reach and Zhunastu Industries peddled F+ technology to member and satellite worlds in an effort to draw them into the fold. On Sylea, those who worked with Cleon saw their fortunes grow immensely. GSbAG, which had long held a favourable relationship with the Zhunastus, became the Federation's primary military contractor, building warships for the growing navy and freighters for its expanding merchant lines.

Cleon broke ground on the first Grand Palace of the Imperium. The project was completed in two years. It was an ugly building that looked more like a fortress than a stately manor but this was intentional. Its pyramidal structure and few entrances were designed to make it easier to defend should it come under siege. The palace and its Emperor would have to survive the tumultuous early years of a new empire. Cleon was leery of leaks and initially coy about the exact nature of his grand plans. Only a select group of close confidantes knew the whole picture. The Sylean Federation was going big. Imperial scouts had by this time encountered dozens of pocket empires. Cleon foresaw a future in which there was a place for all of them under the umbrella of a new and powerful empire, one which transcended all that had come before.

Cleon's final act as president and Grand Duke of Sylea was to issue the Warrant for the Restoration of the Imperium. This document declared that the Sylean Federation and its associated worlds would transform into the Third Imperium on the first day of the following year. The warrant claimed that the Third Imperium would one day include all worlds that had once been under the Ziru Sirka and Rule of Man. Precedence, tradition and history would guide the hand of this new Imperium in its quest to restore civilisation to Charted Space.

The Warrant for Restoration did not meet with universal approval. For 650 years, the power structure of the Sylean Federation had calcified. Not everyone was so keen to give it up. Thirteen of the worlds closest to Sylea initially rejected the warrant. Cleon and his closest supporters worked vehemently to gain their support and within a few months had brought five of the 13 back into the fold. Shortly after the founding of the Third Imperium three of these worlds flip-flopped once again and nullified their Imperial memberships. These systems became known as the Wayward Worlds. Fortunately for Cleon he still had the votes in the Grand Senate to carry out his plan, if only barely. On the last day of the 650th year of the Sylean Federation, the Grand Senate ratified the Warrant for Restoration and declared Cleon the first Emperor of the Third Imperium. He was crowned Cleon I on the first day of Imperial year 0 and Sylea was renamed Capital. No longer was it just the provincial capital of a pocket empire. Capital aspired to become the centre of the greatest interstellar empire in human history.

The Emperor of the Third Imperium was given sweeping powers, far more than the leader of Sylea's Grand Senate or its president and a feudal nobility was established that would become an extension of the Emperor's will. Members of the nobility were granted patents that established their titles. Many would be granted fiefs to administer. Nobles would serve at the Emperor's leisure and could have their patents revoked if they did not perform to expectations.

The Grand Senate was dissolved and replaced by the Imperial Moot, a deliberative body composed of the appointed nobles. The Moot was given two powers: the ability to confirm the ascendance of a new Emperor and dissolve the Imperium. Many of its members were former Senators. Others were corporate officers, military leaders and other esteemed individuals who proved their loyalty and commitment to the new Imperium. Provisional fiefs were assigned to the new nobility. These would be altered and consolidated in the months and years ahead as the Imperium took shape.

The Moot convened on Capital in state offices separate from the Imperial Grand Palace. In addition to its primary powers, the Moot served in an advisory role to the Emperor. A senior member of the Moot was selected to serve as Chancellor. This position had special privileges and access to the Emperor. A primary facet of the new Imperium was that its high nobles – primarily its dukes and eventually its archdukes – would have broad powers and oversight over their respective regions. The previous human empires fell because they became too large to manage. The Third Imperium sought to address this shortcoming by sharing the responsibility with a trusted hierarchy of noble bureaucrats.

The Imperial Guard was formed to protect the Emperor on Capital. At first its only regiment was the Sylean Guard but many more regiments would be added over time. The Federation Navy became the Imperial Navy, whose role was to defend the space between worlds and enforce Imperial law. The Imperial Marines were established, the powerful shipborne assault force of the navy. Articles were drafted for the creation of an Imperial Army as well. This would require a sea change in military thinking. Previously the armies of Federation worlds were independent entities. The armies of Imperial worlds would retain some degree of independence but they would engage in joint training exercises, observe certain uniform and equipment standards and share strategic objectives.

The SFSS became the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service (IISS). The organisation was still in flux in the early years of Imperial rule. With corporate and noble influences effectively rooted out, the IISS became a neutral arm of the Imperial government. The branches that were most corrupted – Operations and Administration – were defunded, leaving the less political Exploration and Technical Services branches intact but now bereft of an administrative umbrella and therefore responsible for their own administration. The new IISS had essentially cut off its diseased appendages, leaving only those in place whose motives were deemed to be pure. Members of Operations and Administration who had acquitted themselves honourably were given new roles in the pared down, more efficient service. These changes had an extreme effect on scout culture. A flat, less stratified structure began to take shape, one in which even the lowliest scout had a voice. The flat structure of the Scout Service would soon be reflected in its fleet of starships as well. The venerable *liken*-class scout/courier was adopted as the ship of choice, a small, durable, multi-faceted and most of all economical spacecraft that could be operated by a light crew (one individual if necessary) and which could perform most of the jobs the scouts needed done: communications, survey and exploration. The wedge-shaped design of the ship had withstood the test of time, dating back to the era of the Ziru Sirka. The modern Type-S scout/courier uses a nearly identical form factor with subtle changes.

THE FLEDGLING IMPERIUM

At the dawn of the Third Imperium, its territory included most of the Core and Vland sectors with islands of independence throughout but Cleon had set his sights on a far greater empire. Despite the fact that upon its birth the Imperium was effectively at war – the conflict with the Chanestin Kingdom was in its final throes and the rebellious Santry Cluster was being pacified by the Imperial Marines – it never wavered from its designs upon all of the territory formerly held by the Ziru Sirka and Rule of Man.

Having such lofty aspirations is commendable but actually achieving them another thing altogether. Cleon's method was to kill them with kindness. After the residents of each world were contacted – by the scouts or otherwise – Imperial merchants would attempt to trade with them in order to show the value that the Imperium could bring to their lives. If they consented to join, they were promised the whole package: free trade, defence by the Imperial Navy, assignment of a noble to serve as an intermediary and so on. If they balked, the Imperium would simply move on to the next world and leave the ungrateful ones in the dust. Cleon believed that most worlds would join up and those that did not would eventually come to their senses. What he did not count on was how much patience it would require to see this process through.

The early years of the nascent empire were marked by the second great expansion and an attempt to consolidate territory already held. The effort to draw the more reluctant worlds into the fold would require an impressive value proposition, visible evidence that joining the Imperium was worthwhile. Like any new venture, it would take time to show a profit. Planetary rulers had to understand that there might not be a big payoff during their lifetimes. The reward would be to see the explosive growth of the empire and a future made bright by burgeoning trade. Cleon spent most of his time on Capital during this era, justifying the existence of the Imperium to a divided Moot and carefully cultivating his political relationships. The success of this monumental venture was by no means a certainty at this point. The forces stacked against it were considerable, some of which were banal and others more nefarious. Worlds that had been bypassed and yet committed to the Imperium represented a subtle if persistent threat.

A constant battle that Cleon had to fight with the Imperial court was a tendency towards conservatism in the worlds close to Capital. As the space between the Core worlds became increasingly safe and its trade routes more lucrative, there was less of a desire to take chances lest they 'tip the apple cart'. The only way Cleon could combat this tendency was by extending Imperial borders ever outward.

By the year 20, the Imperium encompassed a good portion of the Antares, Dagudashaag, Ilelish and Massilia sectors, adding to the wide swath of stars it had already acquired along the path to Vland. The membership of the Moot was expanded to incorporate the new barons, marquises, counts and dukes assigned to these territories. Local administrative control was given to new members of the peerage, providing an acid test for the Emperor's distributed management model.

Pirates and reavers still roamed much of Imperial space, especially along the frontier, but regional control of naval forces made it possible to squelch malcontents quickly and efficiently. It would be an exaggeration to say that trade flourished in the frontiers immediately thereafter but it became increasingly apparent that

it would over time. They had only to look at the Core worlds to see the proof. The Wayward Worlds and their ilk began to see the signs of progress passing them by at jump speed. Traders who had established connections to the Imperium's growing system of links and branches were the first to reap the benefits of Imperial expansion. Many of the worlds that had resisted joining thus far came to their senses and applied for membership.

With a growing number of worlds joining the Imperium, Emperor Cleon declared in the year 17 that Imperial citizenship would be granted to all sophonts within Imperial borders, not just humans. There is some debate among academics about the timing of Cleon's declaration. Scouts had begun to make contact with worlds as far as the Ley and Gateway sectors, and there were rumours of missions to the uncharted territories across the Great Rift and recontact with Mother Terra to rimward. With so many distant regions being integrated into the Imperium, most historians believe the declaration was simply a hearty welcome to any and all alien species who were being asked to join. To a great extent this was certainly true. However, there is a movement among academia who also believe it was a harbinger of what was to come. As an avid practitioner of psychohistory, Cleon may well have foreseen the difficulties that would arise with the incorporation of Antares, in part because the culture of the region included Vargr. Cleon could have made the Declaration of 17 with the Vargr of Antares in mind, whom he hoped to recruit along with their human cohorts.

While Cleon never did take a wife, he did produce an heir with his consort, Medi Ahn Thon, a woman of mostly Sylean heritage whose family were wealthy industrialists from Zimiin (now Knabbib). His son, who would one day take the crown as Cleon II, was born in the year 21 and was Cleon's only offspring. Unlike his father Felix before him, Cleon the elder did little to apprentice his son for the leadership role that he would eventually be asked to take. He left the boy's education in the hands of his tutors and university professors. Bereft of a strong father figure, young Cleon turned to Artemsus Lentuli, Chancellor of the Moot and his father's most trusted advisor. Artemsus was the son of Djugashvili Lentuli, who had served as Cleon's intelligence chief in the first years of the Imperium. The younger Lentuli had already lived an eventful life and was famous for helping to fight off a pirate attack on one of his family's ships at the age of 17. He went on to have a distinguished career in the newly created Imperial Navy, followed by a stint as a diplomat for the Moot.

As Chancellor, Artemsus sought to integrate the worlds that had thus far resisted incorporation into the Imperium. He coined the term 'Quarantine Worlds', likening them to viruses or parasites, which must either be treated or cut off from the interstellar community of the Imperium. Quarantine Worlds reaped the benefits of membership in the Imperium without paying taxes or contributing to its defence. Artemsus claimed that the Warrant for the Restoration of the Imperium justified his actions. He employed the Imperial bureaucracy (a.k.a., the nobility) as his agents to draw Quarantine Worlds into the fold with diplomacy where possible but with force if necessary.

With the dream of the Third Imperium in only its nascent stages, Cleon I died in the year 53. His son was crowned Cleon II but quickly decided that he was unfit for the role. After an ignominious year on the throne, during which he became known as 'Cleon the Weak', he abdicated without an heir, expressing his preference that his highly capable Chancellor should become Emperor. The brief but eventful Zhunastu Dynasty had come to an end – for now – to be succeeded by the first of the Lentuli Line. As for young Cleon, he continued to serve the Imperium faithfully, spending a great deal of time on the frontier where he helped Artemsus to integrate Quarantine Worlds.

THE PACIFICATION CAMPAIGNS AND THE SPINWARD FRONTIER

Once crowned, Artemsus adopted a decidedly more aggressive approach to realising the Warrant for Restoration. He initiated the Pacification Campaigns, a massive effort to integrate the Quarantine Worlds and all of the worlds that had been held by the previous empires. In preparation, Artemsus divided the Imperium into five domains: Sylea, Antares, Vland, Ilelish and Gateway. In each domain except Sylea, he appointed an archduke from the ranks of the subsector dukes. The archduke of the Domain of Sylea was also the Emperor. Each of these archdukes was responsible for the integration of their respective Quarantine Worlds and inclusion of historically held regions of space. As Archduke of Sylea, Artemsus led by example.

THE PACIFICATION CAMPAIGNS

The Pacification Campaigns were the first great test of the Third Imperium's approach to government. The archdukes were given broad powers to 'pacify' their worlds. Unlike the traditional approach used by the Vilani bureaux or the chaotic management style of the Rule of Man, Artemsus' archdukes were given clear guidelines and then told to get the job done. They were not forced to wait for a central authority figure to tell them what to do each step of the way. The archdukes' methods met with varying results.

The guidelines that the archdukes were given encouraged multiple levels of diplomacy before considering the use of military force. Firstly, they were to present the benefits of Imperial membership with the implication that joining was not really a choice; it was required. If there was resistance, they were to seek out sympathetic members of the population, arm them and encourage them to rise up in revolution. Should the locals fail in this capacity, directed coups and assassinations were to be considered. If all of the above failed the full military power of the Imperium might then be brought to bear. Ultimately the Emperor would brook no dissent. One way or another, the Quarantine Worlds and the regions claimed by the Warrant for Restoration *would* be integrated… whether they liked it or not.

The Archduke of Gateway was exempted from the Pacification Campaigns. While their day would certainly come, Gateway was simply too recently settled and unruly for any attempt at pacification to be successful. Even so, the archduke managed to get himself killed in battle with the Luriani, an amphibian human Minor Race based in Ley Sector. The Luriani were subsequently pacified but did not join the Imperium until 202.

The Emperor had yet to appoint an Archduke of Sol but plans to do so were in the offing. By the year 100 – about halfway through the Pacification Campaigns – Imperial scouts were making first contact with the worlds of the Solomani Rim. They discovered that the sector had five powerful pocket empires: the Arcturus Federation, the Easter Concord, the Vegan Polity, the Dingir League and the Old Earth Union. A softer touch would be required to draw the Solomani Rim into the Imperium, one which Artemsus himself would devise. Gaining the favour of such a well-established region of space would require a longer game to be played.

THE ANTARES CAMPAIGN

Conquering the Quarantine Worlds of Lishun and Antares was difficult due to the proximity of the Vargr Extents. Quarantines and blockades were routinely flouted by the Vargr who supplied resistant human worlds with virtually whatever they needed. Whatever

the Vargr could not provide from the Extents, they obtained by pirating Imperial merchant ships and then fenced the stolen goods at a premium on the Quarantine Worlds. After decades of frustration, the Imperium went to war in these sectors, conquering the pockets of resistance in Lishun during the early 80s but meeting with stiff resistance in Antares. With some difficulty, the Imperial military conquered the rimward portion of the sector including the much sought-after Antares Cluster. Despite the territorial gains it had made, the Antares Campaigns were considered to be an abject failure. The inability to establish a firm grasp on Lishun and Antares prevented the Imperium from obtaining a beachhead from which it could conquer the Windhorn, Meshan, Mendan and Amdukan sectors, each of which had been partially or entirely in the possession of the Ziru Sirka.

THE ILELISH CAMPAIGN

The Archduke of Ilelish had a remarkably easy job to do during the Pacification Campaigns; most of the worlds in the domain were amenable to integration. Ilelish (the system) was the homeworld of the Suerrat, a human Minor Race that had established an independent empire using sublight gravitic drives before being gifted jump technology by the Vilani. The sector population was approximately 60 percent Suerrat at the time of the campaigns. Ilelish had many pocket empires of various sizes and Tech Levels that recognised the benefits of Imperial membership. Many of these worlds had fond historical memories of the Rule of Man and eagerly welcomed the return of a broad interstellar power with all the benefits it entailed. Furthermore, Ilelish had begun to realise the threat posed by the burgeoning Aslan Hierate to spinward and sought the aid of the Imperial Navy to defend its borders. Ironically, Ilelish would be the source of a great deal of strife for the Imperium in the following centuries but at this time they were happy to become a part of it.

THE VILANI CAMPAIGN

Archduke Lukgirigaasa of Vland easily integrated most of the Dagudashaag sector, much of which already benefited from Imperial largesse. The trade corridor developed between Sylea and Vland in the previous centuries had already touched many of the sector's worlds and slowly drawn them into the fold over time. Any worlds that continued to resist Imperial authority were given simple demonstrations of the benefits of membership followed by equally convincing demonstrations of the military force that could be brought to bear should they decline. Archduke Lukgirigaasa, it appeared, was quite good at demonstrations of force but proven to be sorely lacking when actually called upon to use it. The Imperium met stiff resistance in the spinward portion of the sector and in neighbouring Gushemege where the Lancian culture held sway. Most of the inhabitants of this region had little knowledge of the state of affairs outside their realm and had built a modest interstellar empire of their own. The Lancians resisted integration and marshalled enough forces to rout Imperial squadrons during the Battle of Aakgar. When word got to Artemsus, he retired Lukgirigaasa, replacing him with the dour Archduke Im Derisumir whose years of conflict with the Vargr on the coreward frontier of Vland had steeled him to the realities of war. In typical Vilani fashion, the new archduke regrouped, reinforced his fleets and retaliated with brutal efficiency. The Lancians were brought into the Imperium by force. Stiff pockets of resistance were eradicated with orbital bombardments, cleansing many worlds of their entire populations. Despite the extreme methods employed, the end result was the full integration of all worlds in the domain.

THE SYLEAN CAMPAIGN

The archduke of the Domain of Sylea is also the Emperor, so Artemsus himself was responsible for the pacification and integration of Core, Fornast and Delphi. As the architect of the Pacification Campaigns, Artemsus brought the full range of Imperial powers to bear upon these worlds with great success. Artemsus used diplomacy wherever possible but quickly accelerated the methods used to inciting coups d'état and revolutions, establishing blockades, threatening orbital bombardment and – when necessary – invading and occupying. Core was entirely integrated into the Third Imperium by the year 111 and significant portions of Fornast and Delphi were acquired as well. It was crucial to the future of the Imperium that the Emperor's own domain be effectively pacified and Artemsus made certain that it was. A further goal of the Sylean Campaign was to pacify the worlds of Massilia but it would be centuries before that sector was fully integrated.

The Pacification Campaigns were not met with universal praise. There were many who dissented, some of whom were members of the Moot. The most famous of these was Zuan Kerr, the statesman who had almost single-handedly brought the hostile Ershur subsector in Massilia into the Imperium by going to its worlds, living among its people and cultivating diplomatic ties with them. Kerr opposed the use of force as a method of coercion, preferring instead the peaceful approach that had been fostered by Cleon I. Alas, Kerr died in 67, paving the way for Artemsus' campaigns to begin. It was a testament to Kerr's influence that it took Artemsus another decade to win the Moot over. However, following the violence of the Pacification Campaigns, Kerr would again become a pivotal figure, even posthumously, among those who did not wish to see the Imperium take the path of a belligerent conqueror. Kerr's erudite pleas against the injudicious use of violence changed the way the Imperium approached conflicts.

While Artemsus was in the process of executing the Pacification Campaigns, he never took his attention from the goal of continued expansion. By any means possible, Artemsus intended to prosecute the Warrant for Restoration. The failure of the Antares Campaign to integrate the coreward sectors of the First Imperium was a public relations disaster. Fortunately for Artemsus, he had another advantage.

Just as the Pacification Campaigns had begun, several expeditions had made their way through the Great Rift into Deneb and what would one day be called the Spinward Marches. Previous attempts to gain entry to the region via the coreward portion of Corridor met with disaster for various reasons, not least of which were plundering Vargr corsairs. More successful attempts were made by crossing the Rift via Ishirdu. The Great Rift was a vast obstacle to expansion into the region, but innovation and persistence on the part of the explorers made it happen. In the year 60, an expedition funded by the megacorporation Ling Standard Products established a colony on Mora from which dozens of other colonial expeditions would spring.

The Emperor was eager to get the IISS involved and sent several scout fleets across the Rift, each of which contained 10 or more of the Scout Service's *Iiken*-class scout/couriers. Just as in the days of old, when the Ziru Sirka was expanding its borders, these ships travelled far and wide, collecting survey data of the entire region that would one day become the Domain of Deneb. To celebrate their heroic efforts, Emperor Artemsus founded the Order of the Arrow in 62, which was only open to distinguished members of the Scout Service.

The scouts and other intrepid explorers who crossed the Rift discovered that Deneb and the Spinward Marches were largely uninhabited but not all of its worlds were virgin territory. There were several interstellar polities already there, including the Sword Worlds, Darrian Confederation and Zhodani Consulate. There were records of the latter but it had been thousands of years since they had last been contacted. By 75, Imperial scouts, colonial expeditions and corporate-sponsored enterprises had expanded deep into the Marches and established a colony on Regina. Early expeditions also discovered isolated civilisations on many individual worlds, including dozens in the Trojan Reach that had once been members of the highly advanced Sindalian Empire, which had imploded in an apocalyptic civil war during the Long Night.

The stories out of Deneb were a welcome distraction from the failures of the Antares Pacification Campaign. If the new Imperium could not acquire all of the sectors claimed by the Warrant of Restoration, at least it was in the process of trailblazing a new and largely uninhabited region of space. The Domain of Deneb captured the imaginations of the citizens of the Imperium. The notion that there were uncharted worlds to spinward being made ready for expansion gave people hope for the future.

For a time, the two narratives ran concurrently. On one side, the Imperium was assiduously working to reacquire all systems held by the previous empires, however unrealistic that goal may have been. On the other, the Imperium explored new worlds, reinventing itself and becoming something entirely new. It was time for things to change. Artemsus abruptly called an end to the Pacification Campaigns in the year 120.

TERRA MATER

Scarcely noticed during all the hubbub of the times, a noble by the name of Magis Sergei haut-Devroe completed an extensive research project on the origins of Humaniti. One of the great mysteries of Charted Space was the seemingly simultaneous appearance of human species on dozens of worlds. Haut-Devroe travelled extensively throughout the Imperium, performing exhaustive research of the fossil records of many worlds and examined Humaniti's place in their respective ecosystems. After eliminating Urunishu in Antares as a candidate, it became clear to haut-Devroe and his team that Terra was clearly the homeworld of all human species. He published *The Solomani Hypothesis: The True Origin of Mankind* on Kaggushus in the Massilia sector in 102, perhaps expecting to rock the foundations of the galaxy. Instead, his monumental discovery was initially ignored and later met with tepid acceptance when it was presented to the broader audience of the Imperium in 114. To be fair, it was not the first time Terra had been suggested as the origin world of Humaniti. The Terrans themselves presented convincing evidence during the Rule of Man; however, the ubiquity of the Vilani and racial pride of the 40 or so other human races prevented universal acceptance.

Haut-Devroe proposed that a mysterious alien race called the Ancients took human and canine samples from Terra in approximately -300,000, genetically engineered many of them and seeded them among the worlds of Charted Space. The disappearance of the Ancients was a mystery to researchers who ascertained they had destroyed themselves in an enormous Final War, although the disposition of the winners was never determined. Researchers theorised they may have gone extinct or left Charted Space. The Ancients disappeared from the galactic scene in approximately -290,000, leaving only ruins and altered races behind.

Despite the nonchalance with which the Solomani Hypothesis was received, Emperor Artemsus took it very seriously. The IISS had only recently recontacted the empires of the Solomani Rim and it was readily apparent that incorporating the origin sector of Humaniti would not be accomplished by a pacification campaign. The five pocket empires of the Solomani Rim were each powerful in their own right with separate navies, complex political and economic relationships and old cultures that had weathered the Long Night much better than most such states. Each of the four had retained jump technology and were impeded from expanding into the Imperial Core by the much more severe collapse of the worlds coreward of the Rim.

There was some trepidation on Artemsus' part that if not handled carefully, the Solomani empires could unite in some way before membership in the Imperium was even offered. Many of the worlds of the new Imperium had humans of Solomani descent and might find membership in a competitive Solomani empire more appealing. Artemsus spent the post-Pacification Campaign years letting the dust settle, consolidating commercial relationships with the newly minted member worlds of the Imperium and reaching out across unintegrated territory to begin the process of finding common ground with the Solomani.

Despite acceptance of the Solomani Hypothesis being far from universal, the influence of Solomani nobles in the fledgling Imperium was strong. Many petitioned Artemsus to immediately establish stronger ties with the Solomani Rim and Terra. Artemsus felt it was far too early to bring Terra on board. The Third Imperium was still young and the integration of the alleged homeworld of Humaniti might have disruptive political effects.

Artemsus died in the year 166 at the age of 183, an impressive number for most humans but typical for the Lentuli line. His son succeeded him and was crowned Martin I. Artemsus had been careful not to neglect his son as had Cleon I before him. Martin was fully indoctrinated in his father's philosophy and strategies for establishing a greater Imperium, perhaps to excess.

THE JULIAN WAR

It must have been frustrating for Emperor Martin to have spent his entire life being prepared for the role of Emperor only to have his father live for 183 years. Martin's destiny was put on hold until he had reached the age of 154. To put that in perspective, Martin had more than a century *after* retiring from a distinguished military career to think about what he might do as Emperor before being allowed to actually do it. To make matters worse, once Martin finally did pick a fight, about a decade into his reign, he chose a nemesis who deftly outmanoeuvred him and proved to be his superior in just about every way.

Martin was obsessed with the failure of the Antares Pacification Campaign. Still smarting after half a century, he was adamant in his belief that a second attempt would succeed where the first had failed. With great effort and a significant expenditure of political and military capital, Martin spurred the Archduke of Antares to launch what became known as the Julian War.

The Julian War had been a long time coming. Julian Menderes, the patriarch of the hallowed Menderes Corporation, was named Regent of the Asimikigir Confederation and rallied the disparate states of Mendan and Amdukan into an alliance that became known as the Julian Protectorate. These disconnected interstellar states found common cause in their desire to repel the Imperium. The Vargr of the region had been slaves to humans for centuries but were given their freedom by the progressive Asimikigir Confederation. Rumours that the Imperium was enslaving and killing Vargr in far-off Corridor motivated the Vargr of Antares to fight them.

After the Pacification Campaigns ended, the Julian Protectorate frustrated and delayed Imperial action for over 50 years. The delaying action gave the Protectorate time to build the Star Legion, a unified defence force whose primary purpose was to fend off the Imperium.

The Imperium launched its first attacks in 175, determined to strike a demoralising blow to the Julian Protectorate early in the conflict. The Imperial Admiralty believed that the Protectorate would be overwhelmed by the sheer power and destructive capabilities that its navy brought to bear. The fleet was organised in two columns, one of which drove towards Lasla in Mendan and the other towards the much more ambitious target of Asimikigir in Amdukan, the capital of Julian Menderes' state of origin. Within three years, it appeared as if the Imperium had accomplished its goals, with most of Mendan and Amdukan under Imperial control and the Lasla system as its base of operations. The second fleet was driving towards Asimikigir when things took a surprising turn. A Star Legion fleet, reinforced by squadrons from the Vargr Extents pushed back against the Asimikigir offensive, resulting in a period of retrenchment for both sides that lasted until 183.

Just as the Imperium was prepared to resume hostilities, Julian Protectorate and Vargr fleets launched a two-pronged attack of their own, one of which thrust headlong into the Antares and Lishun sectors, lacerating the flank of the Imperial column. The other fleet crossed the Empty Quarter Rift and struck from behind the Imperial fleet into Antares and Ley. The Star Legion destroyed the poorly defended naval depots in both sectors, crippling the Imperium's chances. The Imperium was forced to retreat in order to defend the gains they had paid for so dearly during the Pacification Campaigns. With memories of the Antares Campaign still fresh in their minds, the worlds of the Antares Cluster revolted against the Imperium and the Star Legion liberated them.

Emperor Martin was forced to sue for peace. The Treaty of Antares was signed in 191, resulting in a significant loss of territory. Powerless to do otherwise, the Imperium granted the League of Antares autonomous status. The Star Legion forces withdrew from Lishun and Ley but the Imperium had lost more than half of the Antares sector. The Imperium withdrew from the region, defeated and demoralised.

Martin failed to anticipate the ability of the Julian Protectorate to draw upon the resources of the Vargr Extents and underestimated the abilities of their navy. He also failed to understand how important charisma is in Vargr society. Julian Menderes was a charismatic leader, one admired by humans and Vargr alike. It would be simplistic to say that the Vargr were also stirred to action by millennia of mistreatment but this was certainly also a factor. This was not the last time the Imperium would have to deal with the Vargr but when they did, they were determined not to repeat the mistakes of the Julian War.

GREENER PASTURES

Colonisation efforts in the Domain of Deneb saw a significant uptick after the Imperium lost the Julian War. If the Imperium could not have Meshan, Mendan and Amdukan, perhaps the acquisition of Deneb and the Spinward Marches would restore Imperial honour and pride.

While Charted Space is far too broad a place for events on one side to affect those hundreds of parsecs away, on Capital the Emperor and his court wanted to weave a narrative that cast the Imperium in a favourable light. The defeated fleets returned home to lick their wounds, rebuild the depots of Antares and Lishun and defend the empire from a growing list of enemies.

Emperor Martin I died in 195 a broken man. He had waited a lifetime to guide the Imperium towards its manifest destiny only to be soundly defeated. His son was crowned Martin II the same year and decided it was time to change the narrative. In spite of the bloody Pacification Campaigns and their aftermath, the Imperium had become more unified. While the Imperial Navy had been off making war in Antares, the interior of the Imperium was consolidating and its economy was improving. Cleon's dream was coming true despite there being a few missteps along the way. It was time to guide the young empire to its next phase.

OUTREACH AND GROWTH

Despite the unmitigated disaster that was the Julian War, the foundations of the Imperium were not shaken. There were no cries for the Emperor's head and no discussion in the Moot about dissolving the Imperium. In fact, quite the opposite. Trade had begun to flourish, the piracy threat within Imperial borders was dissipating and the Imperial Navy started to take shape as the ubiquitous force that it is today. Capital became secure and the wealth of the Imperial family, the nobles of the Moot and megacorporate leaders grew exponentially. Any feelings of malaise were quickly swept away by wealth and security.

After Martin II ascended to the Iridium Throne, his first act was to approve the design for a new palace on Capital, one which did not reflect the fortress mentality of Cleon I. While Cleon had to fight to preserve the fledgling empire, his successors enjoyed the benefits of leading an Imperium that was clearly on the rise. Martin II was a well-travelled man and, like his father and grandfather before him, he had the longevity of the Lentuli line. He was 142 years old when he was crowned Emperor and would reign for 49 years. The new palace was a grand structure with tall spires and glistening domes that invoked the medieval castles of Solomani fairy tales. It was supported on grav pylons 500 metres above the Imperial Park, the most ambitious structure of its kind to date. The Emperor moved into the palace with great fanfare on Holiday of the year 200 as the citizens of the Imperium celebrated the bicentennial of Cleon's grand experiment.

Imperial scouts and members of the diplomatic core had by this time established relations with all five pocket empires of the Solomani Rim. While they were not yet ready to join the Imperium, the Arcturus Federation, Easter Concord, Vegan Polity, Dingir League and Old Earth Union began to trade amongst each other, creating a wealthy microcosm of the Imperium itself. Imperial traders and corporations began to set up shop in the sector and established trade routes to the remote region.

With the Solomani situation seemingly resolved, the Imperium pre-emptively reached out to the Aslan Hierate, signing the Peace of Dark Nebula in 212. This treaty brought a temporary end to the Aslan Border Wars, which had gone on for over 1,000 years, deep into the Long Night. The treaty might have held indefinitely if not for later incursions by colonists from the Old Earth Union. Nevertheless, the treaty was honoured for 90 years, bringing a much-needed respite to the war-torn region between human and Aslan space.

The colonies of the Spinward Marches, had grown and expanded to include more star systems, bumping up against and, in some cases, pushing out the previous inhabitants. The growing importance of the region had become clear and the Emperor was resolved to improve access to the frontier sectors 'behind the Claw'. Transporting the needed materiel across the Great Rift through the Ishirdu system had become impractical and it was time for the Imperium to establish a more easily traversable route. A confrontation with the Vargr in Vland and Corridor was imminent.

THE VARGR CAMPAIGNS

Previous attempts to get to Deneb through Corridor met with disaster. Scout and colonial missions into the region were lost, presumably destroyed by the Vargr, who had been a problem in the region even during the reign of the Ziru Sirka. They had snapped up many star systems in coreward Corridor, Vland and Lishun. The Vargr are nothing if not mercurial and while they had held the region for millennia, the dominant powers shifted many times during the Rule of Man and the Long Night.

Imperial Navy fleets were deployed to the border of the Vargr Extents by Martin II in 220 without fanfare. The initial goal was simple: carve a path through the coreward Corridor sector and secure it. The Imperium had learned a lot about fighting the Vargr during the Julian War. They were highly influenced by charismatic leaders and would quickly give up on a cause or change sides when a leader was shown to have failed or when a superior leader took their place. The primary method of cutting a swath through Corridor was simply to use naval force but the Imperium also learned to divide and conquer the disparate Vargr polities that occupied the region, often pitting them against each other. When one leader lost face, Imperial forces went for the jugular before another more apt leader could take his place.

There were two opposed forces at work in the early part of the Vargr Campaigns. The first was the bad memories of the Imperium's most recent wars. Martin II desperately wanted to avoid the ignominy suffered by his grandfather and father for their involvement in the Pacification Campaigns and Julian War, respectively. Second was the involvement of the Vilani. When in possession of superior forces, the Vilani tendency was to annihilate an opponent, scouring worlds of all life if necessary. The fleet elements that carried out the Vargr Campaigns were largely drawn from Vland and Lishun because of their proximity to Corridor and the majority of their officers and crews were pureblood Vilani. Martin was careful to mitigate their destructive tendencies by adding squadrons from the Core fleets.

The initial thrust of the Vargr Campaigns was to cut a narrow channel into Corridor along the coreward edge of the Great Rift. Where the opportunity presented itself, the fleet would turn slightly more to coreward and cut off low- to medium-population Vargr factions from their rimward holdings. The Imperial fleets were aided by astrography and superior firepower. The Corridor channel was bordered by the Great Rift to rimward and the Windhorn Rift to coreward. There was nowhere for the weaker Vargr forces to run, no safe haven to which they could retreat and regroup. Fight or flight were their only options.

Imperial Naval Intelligence (INI) had a key role in the operation as well, assessing the political situation between the various Vargr states present, making contact with them and establishing allegiances when possible. Naval officers who negotiated well and were seen to be of 'high charisma' successfully recruited many of these small polities and colonies, especially those that were oppressed by larger Vargr states or bands of corsairs. These Vargr served as translators and agents for the Imperial juggernaut as it snaked its way through the sector. Segregated Vargr worlds were offered Imperial membership as a boon for their cooperation under the precedent of the Proclamation of 17. Many of their leaders eagerly accepted the offers while others did so only reluctantly. Those who resisted were ferreted out by the INI and imprisoned, deported or executed, depending on the circumstances.

By 230, a serviceable – if hazardous – route had been carved through Corridor, enabling the Imperium to transport much-needed supplies to the colonies. In time, the path was broadened and secured until most of the sector was integrated. The Imperium was keen to avoid making the mistakes they had made during the Julian War, which had the effect of slowing things down. The process was slow but inexorable, taking one or two star systems at a time and then providing incentives for Imperial citizens to repopulate vacated worlds, expanding outward until their borders pushed up against the larger Vargr polities. Settlements became colonies and colonies grew to become independent governments. While the standard narrative of the era depicts the Imperium blasting their way through, it was in fact also a time of peaceful integration with receptive Vargr populations. The Vargr are a disunified race and are quite willing to cooperate and join forces if presented with charismatic leaders, no matter what their species.

Corridor was not the only front. Once the sector was secure, with many of its worlds sporting system defence squadrons and planetary navies of their own by the year 300, Imperial squadrons turned their attention to Vland and Lishun to clean up Vargr incursions and extricate belligerent polities that had gained footholds there. The missions into these sectors eschewed the diplomatic approach and mostly resorted to violent conflict, sometimes with devastating results.

DYNASTIC CRISIS

Upon his death in 244, Martin II left the Vargr Campaigns only partially complete but was assured of their success. His approach was bearing fruit and he died confident that the Imperium would extend into the Domain of Deneb via Corridor in due time. Unfortunately, Martin did not leave an heir to the throne, bringing a brief pause to the Lentuli line. The ensuing dynastic crisis resulted in the selection of the great-great-great grandson of Cleon II.

There were concerns about his stability before the selection was finalised but powerful members of the Moot pushed it through and Cleon III was made Emperor in 244. It was an unmitigated disaster. The Emperor exhibited many sociopathic and psychopathic behaviours, none more severe than his penchant for murdering those who disagreed with him. Cleon III shot, stabbed, impaled and threw members of the Moot off the ledges of the Grand Palace if they were found to be 'disagreeable'. It did not take long for the Moot to realise their error. 'Cleon the Mad', as he had become known, had to be dealt with. Unfortunately, there were no devices for addressing this unprecedented situation. Desperate times called for desperate measures.

A reluctant Porfiria – herself the oldest issue of the grandnephew of Martin II – accepted the offer of the remaining members of the Moot (the Chancellor himself had been murdered by Cleon and therefore could not personally extend the offer) to ascend to the throne by a new method: the Right of Assassination. Per the dictates of this new convention, Porfiria killed Cleon by her own hand. The fact that Porfiria was not a skilled combatant is largely overlooked by modern historians.

Some claim that Cleon was mortally wounded by a Moot-sponsored hit team, a combat veteran in service to one of the high nobles or possibly even Porfiria's own bodyguard, after which Porfiria herself came onto the scene and delivered the coup de grâce. Whatever the case may be, the Moot approved the action and she was made Empress Porfiria I in 245.

THE RIGHT OF ASSASSINATION

This unorthodox method of selecting a new Emperor was devised after the selection of Cleon III proved to be a bad one. The Moot approved the ability to select a new Emperor by Right of Assassination. This controversial method – which would later cause great strife – included three key tenets:

- The assassin must be a member of the High Nobility.
- The assassin must kill the Emperor by her or his own hand in the presence of witnesses.
- The Moot must then approve the new Emperor just as they would under normal circumstances.

Should the last of the three tenets fail to occur, the assassin could be tried for murder in a court of law depending on the circumstances.

THE PORFIRIAN AGE

The circumstances of Porfiria's rise to power were unusual but she proved to be a dignified and admirable Empress. The Porfirian Age is often understated in history texts. She had been reluctant to take charge, yet did so and ruled for over eight decades. There was war but it was handled methodically and without the bravado of the Imperium's previous military adventures. The era was, historically speaking, unexciting. Imperial borders continued to expand, mostly via diplomacy. The Imperium would – a few centuries later – become embroiled in a Civil War. Many historians theorise that without the stability and growth of the Porfirian Age, the Imperial experiment may have died an early death, becoming a mere footnote in the history of Humaniti.

Porfiria was a free thinker and employed unorthodox methods to solve problems. Recognising that the forces deployed to fight in the Vargr Campaigns were suffering from combat fatigue, the Empress sent the Imperial Guard to fight at their side. The Guard had been expanded to include artillery and cavalry regiments and proved highly effective in its new role, serving as a jump division in some of the most dangerous missions of the war. The deployment of Imperial Guard troops had a positive effect on morale as well. The navy's communications department created holovideos of their exploits, which were seen by the rank and file everywhere. Each film included segments celebrating the effort and contributions of other Imperial military units as well. The Guard deployment left the Empress vulnerable to an insurrection but this was a heady time for the Imperium. The Moot, the peerage and indeed billions of Imperial citizens were reaping the benefits of Cleon's dream. Free trade and the security of the empire were making people rich beyond their wildest imagination and giving them a level of stability that neither they nor their ancestors had seen since before the Long Night.

The Vargr Campaigns continued successfully during Porfiria's reign. With a serviceable route through Corridor, the Imperium established a strong foothold in Deneb and the Spinward Marches, pushing out Zhodani colonies on the spinward-coreward corner of the sector.

In yet another flourish of the Porfirian Age, the Empress abolished the branding restrictions that had been applied to the Imperial Sunburst in 247. Previously, users of the symbol were forced to depict it only in gold on black. Imperial agencies were given permission to alter the colour scheme as they wished so long as the appearance of the logo itself remained the same.

Porfiria was also a great advocate of the IISS and gave the scouts the unprecedented and high-profile task of performing the First Grand Survey of Imperial space. The scouts were to catalogue the astrography, planetology and demographics of the entire Third Imperium. The previous data on the realm harkened back to the Rule of Man so it was high time for an update. The publication of the survey would also serve to unite the Imperium by clearly identifying its boundaries, people, their unique characters and cultures, and the stars and planetary bodies within Imperial borders.

There was also the matter of the Solomani Rim. As the Imperium continued to expand its borders into Massilia, Diaspora and the Old Expanses, it became easier to develop long-distance trade and diplomatic ties with the Rim. Solomani nobles in the Moot had never given up on their desire to reunite with their ancestors. Porfiria sent a mission to confirm haut-Devroe's Solomani Hypothesis in 305, nearly two full centuries after its initial publication. The mission was well received and the Easter Concord agreed to become an Imperial client state. The Concord partnered with the Imperium to develop the Star Lane, a chain of outposts that ran from the coreward edge of the Solomani Rim to Capital itself. The region was still infested with pirates during this era and the fortification of the Star Lane began to address this problem.

The Imperium had achieved a maximum Tech Level of 13, making it the most advanced polity in Charted Space. New technology included the jump-4 drive and materials and life-support tech that made it possible to settle worlds with insidious atmospheres, opening up a bounty of new territory for development.

As the Porfirian Age came to a close, its primary events occurred far from Capital. The spinward colonies continued to flourish with Regina growing in importance and becoming the capital of its subsector. The powerful but controversial Humboldt family was put in charge of the Vincennes subsector in Deneb, whose capital would one day become one of the most technologically advanced worlds in the Imperium. Vast mineral wealth was found in the belts of Glisten and it was discovered that the worlds of the domain had a higher concentration of Ancients sites than had been found in other sectors. More than 200 sites were discovered, including the only functioning Ancients site ever confirmed on Antiquity in Corridor. The excitement of new discoveries on the frontier captured the imaginations of Imperial citizens and fomented the notion that the Imperium was a vibrant, growing polity with a bright future.

Upon her death in 326, Porfiria's son Anguistus was crowned Emperor. Anguistus was much loved by the people. He had been born during the first year of his mother's reign and the public had watched him grow up from infancy. He pledged to continue what his mother had started. While his reign was brief for a Lentuli Emperor, he was credited for being a wise ruler; Anguistus' steady hand helped to expand Imperial borders and consolidate power, fully incorporating all of the Ilelish, Massilia and Zarushagar sectors. Ilelish had proven to be the most contentious of the three. The sector had had some of the most well-developed and resilient pocket empires to make it through the Long Night and some of its citizens questioned the value of an empire that merely governs the space between the stars, leaving worlds to their own fate.

Despite the rising drumbeat of unrest in Ilelish, Anguistus managed to close out the Vargr Campaigns, having pushed out the most powerful states and establishing garrisons on most of the worlds along the coreward border of Corridor. Similar results were achieved in Vland and Lishun with the Imperium either integrating or pacifying the remaining Vargr.

After the death of Anguistus, his second-born son – the first had died during childhood – was crowned Emperor Martin III in 365. Like his father before him, Martin's rule was a steady one – at least in its early decades – marked by the consolidation of power, development of the Imperial bureaucracy, growing economies and increasing military might. As a young adult, Martin became keenly aware of the costs of war. He saw his father struggle daily with the management of the Vargr Campaigns. It was a long and costly affair but deemed worth the price. As a student of history, he knew that the expansionist Aslan posed a similar threat. While the as-yet-unincorporated Domain of Sol served as a de facto buffer state between the Imperium and Hierate, Martin recognised the danger posed by this burgeoning alien race. After learning more about Aslan customs and the value they placed on land holds, Martin issued a formal apology to the clans of the Hierate in 377 for trespassing upon their lands. He then designated the Archduke of Ilelish to serve as the Imperial signatory for the landmark Peace of Ftahalr, signed in 380. This treaty secured a non-aggression pact between the Aslan and Humaniti after over 1,000 years of intermittent border wars and established a 30-parsec buffer zone between the Hierate and Imperium. By this time, many Aslan worlds had been integrated into the Imperium, making their residents Imperial citizens. As a gesture of good will between the two species, Martin authorised the establishment of an Aslan regiment in the Imperial Guard.

PLAN LAZARUS

The Peace of Ftahalr established a 30-parsec-wide gap between the Imperium and Aslan Hierate but Emperor Martin and his military high command were still concerned about the expansionist Aslan. The acquisition of land was a biological imperative for them and could not be controlled with treaties. The Peace of Ftahalr put a stop to their advancement into Solomani and Imperial space but only a fool believed the agreement was permanent. The Aslan had already begun to cross the Great Rift and it did not require a psychohistorian to see that the Aslan Hierate and the Imperium would one day clash in the Domain of Deneb.

The Emperor sent agents to meet with the military command of the Archduke of Sol to design a plan of attack against the Aslan should they ever break the treaty. The array of strategic and diplomatic moves was called Plan Lazarus. Unfortunately, the Ilelish Revolt and subsequent events took priority and Plan Lazarus was scuttled after the death of Emperor Martin III in 456. No comprehensive plan to deal with the Aslan threat has ever been developed to take its place.

With the Grand Survey already under way, in 382 the Emperor expanded the IISS mission to collect data on all of the Major Races that bordered the Imperium. The Scout Service was accumulating massive amounts of information and it soon became clear that they would need a dedicated facility to store all of the data, as well as the samples and artefacts they had collected.

As luck would have it, the scouts made an astounding discovery in 399. There was an old Vilani research station on Aadkhien in the Core that contained a virtual copy of the data contained at the AAB on Vland as well as a cornucopia of additional data that had never been synchronised due to the intercession of the Rule of Man and the Long Night. They also discovered that Aadkhien was at the nominal centre of the Imperium and virtual centre of the galactic plane. As far as the scouts were concerned, it was destiny. They relocated the planet's reclusive and xenophobic Vilani colony to a reservation world and remade Aadkhien into

a central repository of information, renaming the world Reference. For more about Reference, see its description in the Cadion subsector on page 198.

The timing could not have been better. The Grand Survey was completed in 420 and over the next few years, the entirety of its findings was collated and stored at Reference.

I WAS ONE OF THE 1,300

We docked our trader at Maaruur Highport on 108-350, intending to make planetfall two days later. Plans changed when five Imperial Navy dreadnoughts came out of jump at the 100-diameter limit.

With 30 tons of freight bound for Khuumiam and 40 tons of speculative cargo booked, we were planning on a big windfall. Our broker told us we had to come to the Downport to get it. My crew and I spend most of our time on the Sylean Main but we like to shake things up every so often. We'd come to the Maaruur Cluster to check it out. Maaruur itself was the crown jewel with a high-quality starport, lots of products to move and eight billion people living on the planet. Some were Vilani but most were aliens called Shingans.

The night we got there the Highport got shut down. We were told to stay in our ship while the navy sorted things out. Before they blocked our sensors, we saw three of the dreadnoughts position themselves in equidistant spots over the mainworld while the other two went heaven knows where. I tried to calm my crew down any way I could but they were losing it. We'd all heard stories about situations like this but we never thought we'd become involved in one. Some kind of revolt or a viral outbreak or something. We figured they were interdicting the planet. I'd met Shingans before on other worlds and always thought they seemed fine but maybe they were up to something. We had no way of knowing.

The Imperial Navy never told us a thing and they blocked radio transmissions so we couldn't find out what was going on. After a few days, we got inspected by a team in hazmat suits, accompanied by some Imperial Marines. We overheard that there were 1,300 people on the Highport and no one was being let off the planet. Obviously, I couldn't contact my broker for the freight or cargo but it was looking less and less like that was going to be a thing anyway. I had the Downport's tightbeam coordinates but I thought better of trying it. You just don't mess with the navy, especially when something serious like this was going down.

When they finally let us go, we saw a different world than the one we came to. It was on fire. From orbit, we could see that all the major urban areas were glowing like hot coals and huge dust storms were swirling all over the planet. Eight billion people dead, wiped out by orbital bombardment. Now it made sense where the other two ships went. They went to the belts to get rocks to throw. The only folks to leave Maaruur were those of us at the highport who passed quarantine. The only Credits we made on that trip were from a few mid passages booked by folks stuck at the highport. We even took a few Shingans on our jump to Khuumiam. It didn't occur to me at the time but the ones we took were some of the last of their kind. They must have been devastated. Most just stayed in their staterooms during jump and we respected their privacy. We gave them their money back. What else could we do?

THE IMPERIAL ROAD

By the year 400, the trade routes of the Imperium extended from the frontier sectors of Deneb and the contested worlds of Antares, through the Imperial Core and onward to the purported homeland of Humaniti in the Solomani Rim. While the bulk of trade was limited to the jump-1 routes in each sector, long-range trade missions that ran nearly the entire length of the Imperium were not unheard of. Comparisons to the Silk Road of ancient Terra were made. The network of trade routes that connected East Asia with Southern Europe were likened to those that stretched from Terra to Capital and onward to Antares, Vland and Regina.

The monumental growth of the Imperium resulted in the creation of new megacorporations. Lucien Hortalez founded Hortalez et Cie, a banking and insurance firm that underwrote large-scale development projects and colonial enterprises. Hortalez and other companies like it increased the efficiency of the expansion. Before the existence of such companies, there was little oversight for colonial expeditions. Professional underwriters became a mitigating force, funding projects that had the best chances for success and denying the rest as too risky. These corporations became an uncelebrated engine for Imperial expansion.

Schunamann und Sohn AG (SuSAG) was founded in 252, primarily to manufacture psionic drugs. The corporation expanded into many other markets as well, including pharmaceuticals, medical and surgical products, industrial chemicals, chemical and bacteriological weapons and geneered organisms for industrial and agricultural applications. Over time, SuSAG acquired an unfavourable reputation due to its

involvement with psionic drugs and other controversial projects but the corporation and others like it produced many products that improved the lives of Imperial citizens and made it possible to colonise worlds with challenging environments.

The efficiency with which the Imperial bureaucracy managed the domains increased. Individual worlds were allowed to govern themselves as they saw fit, resulting in unique cultural and societal flavours. Cleon's dream of a massive trade empire, defended by the most powerful and well-equipped navy in history, had come to fruition. While all Imperial worlds enjoyed the benefits of unity, there were those who saw the Imperium not as the realisation of a dream but only as an evolutionary step in the development of human civilisation. The Imperium felt otherwise; any evolution that was happening stopped at the Iridium Throne.

THE ILELISH REVOLT

In 418, the government of the Ilelish system, capital of a sector by the same name, declared its independence from the Imperium. Ilelish was the homeworld of the Suerrat human Minor Race. It and many other high-population worlds in the domain had begun to feel neglected by the expanding empire, which had focused most of its resources on defence of the borders, growth of the frontier and the construction of the Star Lane. By 420, 12 other high-population worlds across six subsectors had joined the Ilelish Revolt. The governments of these worlds were united in the belief that independence was the best way forward for them. By design, the Imperium did not interfere in the affairs of individual worlds provided they did not break Imperial law. The leaders of the Ilelish Revolt sought to create a separate state that took a much heavier hand in world affairs, standardising Law Levels, governance and access to technology. This was a crime that invoked the high justice clause, enforced by Imperial military forces.

In exile, the Archduke of Ilelish called Capital for assistance. The Imperium reinforced the Ilelish Sector Fleet with elements of the Dagudashaag and Gushemege fleets and blockaded the worlds involved in the revolt. Most surrendered with minimal violence and Ilelish was the last to fall in 435. To prevent future revolts, the Imperium made an example of Ilelish. They evacuated the lush equatorial region where most of its population lived and blasted it into oblivion, reducing a once vibrant world into a highly populated backwater. The capital of the domain was moved to Dlan. Nearly seven centuries later, Ilelish remains an ecologically and economically devastated world.

The destruction of Ilelish was intended to be an abject lesson: defy the Imperium at your own peril. Emperor Martin III recalled members of the Ilelish peerage to Capital, whereupon he personally revoked many of their noble patents and demoted the Order of Ilelish in precedence. Some were tried and convicted of treason and either executed or shipped off to the prison camp

on Sher. Notably, he left the archduke in place. Before sealing the deal, Martin gave a public address in the Imperial Park, on the grounds between the palace and Moot Spire:

The peerage is responsible for the administration of the domains, sectors, subsectors, worlds and continents. If they fail to do their jobs, they risk the integrity of the Imperium itself. Emperor Cleon built this empire on the foundation of duty and honour. Without it, we have nothing.

The Ilelish Revolt had been brewing for decades before it occurred. There were rumblings as early as 399 when several of the domain's high-population worlds had begun negotiating for an autonomous region, similar to that of the League of Antares. The Emperor knew about this but did nothing, placing his faith in the peerage to resolve the issue. The fabric of the Imperium was the power vested in the archdukes and subordinate nobles to manage their domains. In most such crises, the nobility was successful in this capacity. Not so in Ilelish. Martin saw it as a potential harbinger of things to come and was forced to make significant changes in the way the domains were managed. Cleaning house in Ilelish was just the beginning.

BAD MOONS RISING

Martin III was killed in an air/raft accident on the Imperial reserve world of Crompton in 456. The Emperor was reportedly taking an evening ride with his consort just as the planet's two moons were rising on the eastern horizon. He died at the age of 167, once again exhibiting the longevity of the Lentuli line. He outlived his heir, who would have been crowned Martin IV, so his grandson ascended to the throne as Martin V. Unfortunately, the new Emperor did not have the hearty constitution of his ancestors and died of natural causes the following year at 100, middle age by Lentuli standards. Martin's daughter, Nicholle, was confirmed by the Moot and crowned the second Empress of the Imperium in 457.

Empress Nicholle's reign was brief and undistinguished. She did oversee the absorption of the Easter Concord into the Imperium in 426, strengthening ties with the Solomani Rim and coming ever closer to integrating Terra. The Star Lane had, by this time, become a secure route from the Imperial Core to the Solomani homeworld. Hundreds of parsecs in the other direction, the Imperium continued to consolidate its holdings in the Spinward Marches, annexing the Vilis subsector and making an enemy of the Sword Worlds, a pocket empire of Terrans who had come to the region centuries earlier aboard sublight generation ships. Things were proceeding apace but most events were the products of historical momentum more than any sort of directed plan. If recent events were any indication, sleepwalking through history was not an advisable approach. However, the Empress showed little interest in developments that were far from the Imperial Court on Capital. Pressed by the Chancellor to appease the burgeoning frontier, the Empress declared Aosta in Deneb to be an Imperial reserve world in 474, the first water world to receive the distinction. The declaration was… underwhelming, not at all what the Moot was hoping for.

Despite the continued expansion of the Imperium, the Moot and its Chancellor were frustrated by the unwillingness of the Empress to address the Imperium's most pressing issues. Nicholle's great-grandfather had left unfinished business to his heirs. The Peace of Ftahalr was a singular achievement but most believed it merely delayed confrontation with the Aslan; a long-term solution was required. Furthermore, the Ilelish Revolt had revealed weaknesses in the bureaucracy that required tending to. Nicholle was, by most accounts, disinterested in dealing with such issues. The Moot and a co-conspirator of dubious lineage decided to take action.

Admiral Eledon Shaster, a distant heir of the Zhunastu line, was selected from an extensive cast of characters to become the first non-dynastic Emperor. Admiral Shaster had enjoyed a distinguished naval career, which had earned him the undying loyalty of the Core Sector Fleet. Although he only had tenuous ancestral lines to the original Zhunastu Dynasty, he had exactly what the activist cabal from the Moot wanted: ambition and dubious ethics. Shaster was credited with the assassination of the Empress and her entire family, clearing the way for a new Emperor to take her place. The majority of the Moot cried foul but extortion, death threats and other skulduggery ensured there would be just enough votes to confirm the new Emperor. Shaster was crowned Cleon IV in 475, setting a dangerous precedent for the Imperium. While the previous use of the Right of Assassination was arguably justified since it rid the throne of Cleon the Mad, the assassination of Nicholle merely for being disinterested in the job or 'too weak' as Shaster himself had said, would come back to haunt the Imperium.

The reign of Cleon IV was corrupt from the beginning. Five years after his coronation, Cleon revoked the patents of dozens of Vilani nobles, many of whom held positions in the Moot. He then promoted others in their places, most of whom were of either pure or mixed

Solomani blood. Coinciding with these events were a number of declarations made by the Emperor that removed regulations and restrictions on the abilities of the peerage to tax the Imperial citizens under their purview. The additional windfall of tax revenue found its way directly into the accounts of the nobility themselves. The megacorporations and merchant lines were making astronomical sums of Credits as the Imperium grew larger and more secure. The peerage wanted their cut and they got it at the behest of a pliable Emperor who served their every whim.

There was no shortage of investigative journalism exposing this corruption but bribery, murder and control of key media outlets kept localised scandals from becoming an Imperium-wide scandal. Meanwhile, Cleon IV distracted the citizens of the Imperium. The Imperium manufactured crises when necessary and in other cases merely took advantage of events that played into their hands. One such event was the Hidden War.

Emperor Martin III had launched a series of Alien Missions in 382 whose intention was to survey the territories of the Major Races. The Vargr Mission occurred from 486 to 499 and included the region of space held by the Julian Protectorate. The Julians did not take kindly to intrusions of their sovereign space and used terrorism and hired Vargr corsairs to harry scouts wherever they could. The Imperium responded by sending Imperial Naval Intelligence (INI) agents to counter the threat. This 'Hidden War' was initially classified by the Imperium but received a great deal of media attention in the Julian Protectorate, news of which inevitably found its way back to the Imperium. Emperor Cleon IV used the Hidden War for propaganda purposes, leveraging it as a unifying issue in the Imperium.

Despite the exorbitant wealth and relative stability of the era, the reign of Cleon IV was largely viewed as a blight upon the history of the throne, one which would end as abruptly as it began… with an assassination. Jerome, yet another dubious claimant to the throne, murdered Cleon in 555 in what was likely his deathbed; had Cleon IV been allowed to die naturally, his heir would have ascended to the throne and the non-dynastic era would have ended. However, Jerome made sure to kill the heir and everyone else in his family tree who might have had a claim. Clearly the Moot – or at least an influential cabal therein – was onto something. By removing dynasties before they were allowed to happen, they made the Emperor their puppet. An Emperor beholden to the Moot ruled at the beck and call of the nobility. What could go wrong? As it turned out, a great deal.

As the non-dynastic era unfolded, the foundations of the Third Imperium began to dissolve. The sectors which suffered the greatest losses of power at court were those on the frontiers, several of which were key players in the long-term plans of the empire. The beneficiaries of the centralisation of power were the sector dukes and Admiralty. Each pursued their own agendas, which were not always in concert with one another.

The sectors of the Domain of Deneb began to feel the pinch as did the Solomani Rim. In the Marches, it became clear that should a crisis arise they were on their own. This occurred just as tensions with the neighbouring Zhodani Consulate, Vargr Extents and Sword Worlds began to rise. Conversely, in the Solomani Rim, the pocket empires began to join the Imperium at an increasing rate, even as the stability of the empire began to dissipate.

Shortly after the assassination of Jerome by Jacqueline, the third of the non-dynastic Emperors, the pieces began to fall into place in the Solomani Rim. The Dingir League joined the Imperium in 582 followed closely by the Arcturus Federation in 583. Empress Jacqueline appointed the first Archduke of Sol, hastening the following events. The Vegan Polity joined in 586 and then finally, the grand prize: the Old Earth Union and its capital at Terra joined in 588. The event was accompanied by a scientific expedition to Terra, which confirmed the findings of the Solomani Hypothesis once again. Terra was the homeworld of all Humaniti and now it was a prized world of the Third Imperium.

Terra had long hung over the Imperium like a Sword of Damocles. As the confirmed homeworld of Humaniti and one of the most powerful economic forces in Charted Space, its destiny was undeniable; yet its integration into the Imperium had been dreaded for centuries. Terra would immediately pose a political threat to Capital. Regardless of its distance from the Imperial Core, the legacy and symbolic power of Terra could not be denied. The integration of Terra had to happen, yet it posed a threat to everything the Imperium stood for, and worse, it occurred just as the Imperium was wavering from self-inflicted wounds. As bad as things had gotten, they were about to become much worse.

THE FRONTIER WARS BEGIN

After decades of sabre rattling, the Zhodani Consulate and two Vargr states – the Ngoerrgh Togzekhz and the Gnaithlloellarrgh Gzolakhgha – launched an attack against the Imperium in the Spinward Marches in 589. The initial plan of the aggressors, who called themselves the Outworld Coalition, was for the Vargr to raid the coreward worlds of the Regina and Aramis subsectors while the Zhodani conquered Cronor and Jewell. The Imperium gained an ally in the Darrian Confederation, which had lost the so-called Entropic Worlds to the opportunistic Sword Worlds, who joined the war on the side of the Coalition.

After receiving word of the war, Empress Jacqueline established the Domain of Deneb, uniting the Spinward Marches, Deneb, Trojan Reach and Reft. However, she did not appoint an archduke to the new domain, giving it no central leadership. The creation of the new domain was intended to be a symbolic move that would carry a great deal of weight. What the worlds of the domain really wanted was Imperial military support.

The war lasted for 15 years with many systems changing hands. The Imperium lost most of the Jewell cluster early but reacquired their foothold in 603 when fleet elements commanded by Grand Admiral Olav hault-Plankwell pushed the Zhodani out of Jewell and Emerald after intense fighting.

The decisive battles of the war were fought in 604. Zhodani Grand Admiral Tliaklabtl attempted to strike a decisive blow in the Battle of Jae Tellona, in which combined Zhodani and Vargr fleets would purportedly overwhelm the colonial forces of the Imperium. However, the Vargr squadrons failed to show up for the battle, leaving the Zhodani to fight alone and they were defeated by Admiral Plankwell with reinforcements from Porozlo. In the Battle of Rhylanor, a young Duchess Arbellatra Alkhalikoi led undermanned Imperial system defence forces against the Zhodani. She was made a captain by Plankwell at the age of 20 as a reward for her accomplishments. The final battle of the war was fought at Zivije, where the Gzolakhgha Vargr and Zhodani made their final stand. They were outmatched by the combined Imperial fleets that routed them. Admiral Plankwell declared victory as exhausted forces on both sides ceased fighting with one another. The two sides in the conflict paused briefly to regroup and rearm.

All told, the Zhodani made territorial gains in Cronor but the Imperium acquired several worlds in Jewell. The failure of the Ngoerrgh Togzekhz Vargr resulted in a civil war that broke the Vargr state apart. The Darrians pushed the Sword Worlds out of the Entropic Worlds with help from the Imperium. An enraged Admiral Plankwell collected elements of his fleet and made his way to Capital.

The respite between the First and Second Frontier Wars was brief. By 609, the Gzolakhgha Empire and the Ekhlle Ksafi (the most powerful splinter state that emerged from the Ngoerrgh Togzekhz Civil War) joined with the Zhodani to prepare for a second war with the Imperium. This time, the Sword Worlds joined the Outworld Coalition at the beginning of the war in an attempt to reacquire all of the worlds they had lost to the Imperium in Vilis.

The Zhodani launched the first attack of the Second Frontier War in 615 at Cipango. The war quickly spread to Jewell and Regina. The Vargr were much more effective allies in the second war. Again without support from Capital, newly appointed Grand Admiral Alkhalikoi executed a holding action with the limited resources at her disposal. The manufacture of several new dreadnoughts, which were quickly launched into action, helped stave off relentless Zhodani attacks. The Imperium was once again joined by the Darrian Confederation, who turned back the Zhodani with the threat of the Star Trigger, a stellar destabilisation weapon that was allegedly in their possession. By the end of the war, the Zhodani had conquered all of Cronor and several worlds in Jewell. The Vargr failed to permanently acquire any new territory but made themselves rich with plunder and successfully diverted Imperial forces that would otherwise have fought the Zhodani. The Sword Worlds were soundly defeated by the Imperium, which occupied many of their worlds for five years after the war. Tired of being drawn into these conflicts, 11 worlds in Vilis seceded from the Imperium, becoming independent. Depleted from two devastating wars, there was little the Imperial Navy could do about it.

All in all, the Second Frontier War was disastrous for the Imperium, despite the heroic efforts of its military to stave off the invasion. In most eras, the public would have called for the heads of the Sector Admiralty after taking such a beating but the citizens of the Marches generally understood that they had been abandoned by the Imperium. Like her mentor before her, Grand Admiral Alkhalikoi intended to take their grievance directly to Capital, hoping to achieve more lasting results. She left the sector in the capable hands of Baron Caranda of Regina.

THE CIVIL WAR

At the end of the First Frontier War, a furious Grand Admiral Olav hault-Plankwell gathered his remaining forces and made his way to Core. Plankwell intended to express his indignation in the most dramatic way possible: by usurping the throne. He arrived at Capital in 606, purportedly to celebrate the victorious efforts of the First Frontier War but promptly murdered Jacqueline and declared himself Emperor Olav I by Right of Assassination. Olav's ascendance ended the era of the non-dynastic Emperors but did little to quell the instability of their reign. His brief run as Emperor was cut short when his most trusted officer assembled disgruntled fleet elements, uniting them with squadrons of the Core fleet and defeated Plankwell in battle, declaring himself Ramon I. He was confirmed by the Moot, beginning the disastrous era of the Emperors of the Flag.

A succession of Emperors of the Flag ruled the Imperium for 13 years. Power was acquired by 'Fleet Control', in which a prospective claimant to the throne assembled portions of the Imperial Navy, came to Capital, imposed their will upon the current Emperor by defeating loyalist naval forces and then either assassinated or killed him or her in battle.

All of this was arguably made possible by the era of the non-dynastic Emperors who gradually centralised power around Capital and ignored the burgeoning Imperial frontiers. The citizens of the Imperium had come to expect more from their Emperor. The bureaucracy had been appointed by Cleon I to serve with honour and duty. The archdukes, dukes and all of the peerage were to perform as extensions of the Emperor. The untimely assassination of Empress Nicholle 131 years prior to the Civil War had started a chain of events that unravelled the very fabric of Cleon's Imperium and untethered the strands of duty and honour upon which it was built. It was time for the Imperium to pay the consequences.

EMPERORS OF THE FLAG

From 609 to 622, a series of short-lived Emperors ruled the Third Imperium. All of them ascended to the throne by Right of Assassination or Right of Fleet Control. All were naval officers of flag rank and all were pure Solomani. Perhaps the darkest hour of the Civil War was the brief era of the Barracks Emperors, in which many claimants to the throne arose, none of whom were confirmed by the Moot and therefore not worthy of mention. The region around Capital briefly became an autonomous state but the Imperial bureaucracy remained in power, preventing the dissolution of the Imperium.

Emperor	Reign	Events
Olav	606–609	The hero of the First Frontier War arrived at Capital under the pretence of celebrating the victory and broke the non-dynastic line of Emperors by assassinating Empress Jacqueline I. Confirmed by the Moot. Olav disbanded the Imperial Guard and Marine Escort Service.
Ramon I	609	Protégé of Olav who convinced a large portion of the fleet to revolt. Ramon's forces appeared to have lost in the Battle of Tricanus but his destruction of Olav's flagship turned the tide. Olav was killed during the boarding action. Credited with the invention of the Right of Fleet Control. Confirmed by the Moot after some deliberation only to be assassinated by Constantus.
Constantus	609–610	Claimed the throne by Right of Assassination. Not confirmed by the Moot. The IISS declared neutrality during Constantus' brief reign.
Nicolai	610–612	Defeated Constantus in the Battle of Rakakaka, killing him in battle and then claiming the throne by Right of Fleet Control. Not confirmed by the Moot.
George	612–613	Ascended to the throne by Right of Assassination. Not confirmed by the Moot.
The Barracks Emperors	613–615	A succession of claimants to the throne, too numerous to name, assassinated and slew one another in battle during this chaotic era. The Sylean Worlds temporarily became an autonomous state. The Second Frontier War began in the Spinward Marches
Cleon V	615–618	The last of the Barracks Emperors broke up the Sylean autonomous state and was confirmed Emperor by the Moot in a close vote. The IISS sided with Cleon, revoking its neutrality clause. Cleon appointed Arbellatra Alkhalikoi Grand Admiral of the Spinward Marches Sector Fleet.
Joseph	618	Just as the Moot thought that the debacle had come to an end, along came another pretender to the throne. Joseph defeated Cleon by the Right of Fleet Control in the Battle of Markatch, killing him in battle. Not confirmed by the Moot.
Donald	618	Hoping to capitalise on the ill will that Joseph had engendered, Donald assembled a fleet and defeated those of Joseph in the Battle of Arakoine, killing him in battle. Donald was not confirmed by the Moot and did not survive the year.
Emdiri	618-619	Claimed the throne by Right of Assassination towards the end of 618 and barely made it into 619 before suffering the same fate. Not confirmed by the Moot.
Catherine	619	Exhausted by the string of pretenders, the Moot nominated Catherine to sit upon the vacant throne. Allegedly she murdered Emdiri, becoming Empress by Right of Assassination. Catherine only survived for a few months.
Ramon II	619	The Moot's puppet, Catherine, was given short shrift. Ramon II assassinated her and ascended to the throne. A reluctant but exhausted Moot confirmed him, hoping for peace.
Jacqueline II	619	Defeated Ramon II in the Battle of the Nivzhine Belt, killing him in battle. The Moot confirmed her as Empress.
Usuti	619–620	Defeated Jacqueline II in the Second Battle of Arakoine, killing her in battle. The Moot confirmed him as Emperor.
Marava	620	Defeated Usuti in the Third Battle of Arakoine, killing him in battle. Destroyed the Grand Palace of Martin II during the final assault on Capital. The palace remains on the grounds of the Imperial Park where it crashed during the conflict. The Moot confirmed Marava as Empress.
Ivan	620–621	Defeated Marava in the Battle of Sulgami, killing her in battle. The Moot confirmed him as Emperor.
Martin VI	621	Defeated Ivan in the First Battle of Zhimaway, killing him in battle. The Moot confirmed him as Emperor.
Gustus	621–622	Proclaimed Emperor by Right of Assassination. Confirmed by the Moot.

SAVIOUR OF THE EMPIRE

Grand Admiral Arbellatra Alkhalikoi is sometimes referred to as the last of the Emperors of the Flag. Doing so is a disservice to her legacy.

Like Admiral Plankwell, Arbellatra assembled elements of her fleet at the conclusion of a Frontier War and promptly embarked upon an epic journey of nearly 150 parsecs from Rhylanor to Capital. Emperor Gustus awaited her arrival with the might of the 1st Fleet at his disposal. Arbellatra defeated the bulk of his forces at the Second Battle of Zhimaway, the system's most prominent gas giant, and then proceeded to Capital where she assassinated Gustus. Unlike the previous 17 usurpers, Arbellatra did not claim the throne. She asked the Moot to confirm her not as Empress but as Regent. She held the throne in escrow until a suitable candidate could be found. Her actions ended the Civil War and peace finally returned to the Imperium.

As Regent, Arbellatra made allies in the Moot and established a power base among the peerage. By absolving all participants in the war for their actions during it, she established firm control of the military, particularly the navy that had been divided into countless factions by use of the Right of Fleet Control. In an effort to maintain the hard-fought stability that had been restored, the Moot granted the Regent sweeping powers, not unlike those of the Emperor.

Arbellatra promoted the Marquis Caranda, making him the first Duke of Regina. For their loyal service during the Civil War, she rewarded the Geonee by creating the Duchy of Shiwonee and moving its subsector capital to Shiwonee. Arbellatra's generosity did not extend to all domains. In Antares, she revoked the patent of Archduke Glazdon Deirdin for not supporting the Regency, installing Admiral Soegz in his place, the first Vargr to be so honoured. Deirdin was executed for treason. Likewise, in Deneb, Arbellatra revoked the patents of the Humbolts of Vincennes. The Marquis Humbolt had perhaps been expecting a promotion to duke but was sacked for the involvement of his family in numerous criminal activities. The Humbolts disappeared from public view, perhaps exiling themselves somewhere beyond Imperial borders.

In 624, Arbellatra established the Imperial X-Boat Network, which would hasten communications between all of the domains and most importantly to Capital itself. The IISS would manage the system with a network of way stations. Over time, the function of these bases would expand from mere maintenance facilities to full training centres. This move transformed the IISS bureaucratic structure into its current state, establishing Communications, Exploration and Survey branches. The project was expected to take many decades before it was completely functional and serviced the entirety of the Imperium.

The advent of the Imperial X-Boat Network was accompanied by a major event in the history of the IISS: the establishment of the *Suleiman*-class scout/courier, x-boat and x-boat tender as the primary starships of the service. Previously, the scouts used a broad array of spacecraft manufactured by myriad vendors. With the creation of way stations to service its ships, higher-ups in the IISS bureaucracy realised that the costs of maintaining so many sets of spare parts could bankrupt the service. By standardising on the trio of key starships, the IISS reduced the impact on its budget immensely.

Arbellatra settled in at Capital, re-established the civility of the Imperial court and married Duke Sergey Torgyan Ashran of Cemplas, with whom she had three children: Zhakirov, Anton and Maryam. The first two of her children were born during the Regency era.

After seven years of fruitless searching for a viable heir to the throne, Arbellatra was asked by the Moot to become Empress. Arbellatra was the first of the Alkhalikoi Emperors, returning the Imperium to dynastic rule. The Alkhalikois remain in power in modern times after nearly 500 years of stability.

In the first year of her reign, Arbellatra established the Sylean Worlds cultural zone at the request of the Sylean Concord. The combined leadership of its worlds reminded the Empress that at the Imperium's darkest hour, they allowed their worlds to become an autonomous state so the empire might survive. They expressed their desire that their worlds should never be used in such fashion again and began the process of demilitarisation shortly thereafter. To this day, of all the Sylean Worlds, only Capital maintains a permanent military presence.

A TALE OF TRAMP TRADERS

A curious historical sidenote from the Civil War era was the creation of the *Empress Marava*-class far trader. While Marava's reign was a short one, lasting less than a year, her singular achievement was the felling of the Grand Palace of Martin II, destroying its gravitic suspensors and bringing the fairy tale-style castle crashing into the Imperial Park where it remains to this day. For some, this event signified a new beginning for the Imperium and while there was no reason to believe that Marava's reign would last any longer than the previous 13 Emperors of the Flag, there was a great deal of excitement about it on her homeworld of Kaskii.

A small and struggling starship architecture firm on Kaskii called Bilitig und Dottir commemorated Marava's rise to power with the design of the 200-ton jump-2 *Empress Marava*. The ship featured distinctly Solomani lines, employing the 'bomber-nose' look used on some of their bulk freighters. The firm boasted that its jump-2 drive would liberate the ship from the jump-1 mains plied by the ubiquitous Type-A free trader. Never mind that savvy Type-A owners had been fitting their ships with jump-2 drives for centuries; Bilitig brazenly marketed their ship as the first of its kind and boasted that it would revolutionise the tramp trader business.

The initial run of starships sold out in short order but with the death of the actual Empress Marava in the Battle of Sulgami, the class faded into obscurity. Bilitig had banked its entire firm on the project and went bankrupt when a second run failed to materialise the interest of the first. However, with the ascent of Arbellatra to the role of Regent, the class showed new signs of life. By the time she had taken the throne in 629, the *Empress Marava*-class had finally found a solid market. Its specifications were made available as open source and several starship-construction companies began to manufacture it.

A minor controversy occurred some years later when remnants of the ancient Vilani *Garu*-class far trader were discovered in the Ley and Glimmerdrift sectors. The clunkier, more utilitarian *Garu* had a nearly identical interior form factor and deck plan to the *Empress Marava*. With the proprietors of the *Garu* design lost in the annals of time and the *Marava* having become an open source starship, there was no legal conflict to be had. Examples of both classes may now be found in operation throughout Charted Space.

BELLE EPOQUE

The first years of the Alkhalikoi Dynasty were industrious. A great deal of damage had been done during the Civil War and things had to be set right. The Marine Escort Service and Imperial Guard were reinstated with a marine regiment added to the latter. The intelligence services received a thorough house cleaning, removing administrators and agents who did not exhibit adequate loyalty to the Empress, replacing them with hand-picked successors.

After the dramatic crash of the palace of Martin II, a new one would have to be built. Arbellatra approved a design for a new Grand Palace and construction began immediately. The project was completed in 633. The Grand Palace of Arbellatra was a one-kilometre diameter sphere that floated above the Imperial Park using gravitic lifters. It looked down upon the grounded Palace of Martin II and stood 4.5 kilometres from the Moot Spire, whose peak reached just above that of the new palace. For a complete description of the palace, see The Grand Palace of Arbellatra on page 157.

Arbellatra made many sweeping changes intended to establish the power and security of the post-war Imperium. Others were intended to be subtle. It had not been lost on Arbellatra that all 17 Emperors of the Flag, including herself, were Solomani. To achieve greater balance, Arbellatra promoted many Vilani nobles in the peerage. The integration of the Solomani Rim had been interrupted by the Civil War, so this was a dangerous time to make such changes but she deemed them necessary nonetheless.

The Empress established several new orders of knighthood, including the Order of Hlyuea for loyal Aslan citizens and the Order of Gvadakoung for Vargr. She also founded the Order of the White Star for esteemed psions. Previously, psionics had been viewed with an element of scepticism in the Imperium. This move brought psionics to the forefront, lending them previously unseen levels of validity and acceptance.

The Arbellatran Age was mostly one of peace in which the empire renewed its commitments and worked hard to restore the faith of its citizens. There was the usual array of revolts to put down and a few brushfire wars to attend to but large-scale conflicts were avoided. The era came to an end in 666 upon the death of Arbellatra by natural causes and the subsequent ascendance of her son, Zhakirov.

DISTANT THUNDER

The early years of Emperor Zhakirov's reign featured a continuation of his mother's policies, emphasising security, economic growth and above all, peace. If the 20 sectors of the Imperium were the branches of a tree, withered by the Civil War, those branches were reinvigorated during the post-war era, given bright new leaves, solid branches and a healthy trunk. The central authority of Capital was once again reinforced by an honour-bound nobility. Dissenting dukes and archdukes had their patents revoked and were replaced by those who fully supported the Emperor and served the greater good of the empire.

Sacrifices had to be made to create peace and stability. While the empire was composed of trillions of sophonts, including a multitude of Minor Races, it was still essentially governed by a Vilani-Solomani compact. The Rule of Man may have perished some two millennia earlier but the spectre of Solomani culture still hung over it like a dark cloud. The Solomani nobles who dominated the Moot, fairly or unfairly, were blamed for much of the chaos that had occurred. Their greed precipitated the non-dynastic emperors and fomented the Civil War in which each of the usurpers was of Solomani descent. Empress Arbellatra and her heir, Zhakirov, devised a seismic shift to the centre by promoting Vilani nobles. If this was not a sure sign that the Imperium intended to establish greater balance, Zhakirov made it abundantly clear when he married Antiama Shiishuginsa, a Vilani noble from a powerful family.

Publicly, the shift reflected a desire for greater balance and stability but privately the Emperor knew that he had a new and burgeoning threat to deal with: the Solomani Movement. This movement expressed that it was the destiny of the Solomani people to rule all of Charted Space. The recent integration of Terra and subsequent failure to complete the acquisition of all Solomani territories to rimward made the Solomani Movement dangerous to the empire.

Zhakirov's death in 688 should have been followed by a smooth transition to the next Imperial heir but the situation was unprecedented: the ascendant Empress Margaret was only four years old at the time of her coronation. A Regency Council governed on her behalf until she was determined to have come of age. Cynical factions in the Moot – especially aggrieved Solomani – saw this as an opportunity to foment yet another dynastic crisis, possibly creating a second civil war, but cooler heads prevailed and Margaret was permitted to take the throne.

Under the advice of her Chancellor and key members of the Moot, Margaret declared the Solomani Autonomous Region with the Mandate of 704. This gave the Solomani semi-independence in a 50-parsec radius from Terra. The Mandate placated the powerful Solomani region and established much-needed separation between the Rim and Solomani agitators in the Imperial court, yet set the stage for problems down the road. The Imperium had by this time reached a maximum Tech Level of 14, surpassing the abilities of all of its neighbours. Its navy was the most powerful military force in Charted Space but its officer corps was still dominated by Solomani. To prevent the Imperium from returning to the self-destructive days of the Civil War, concessions had to be made to the Solomani Rim. Over time, it became increasingly obvious that no amount of conciliatory action could satisfy the adherents of the Solomani Movement.

THE SOLOMANI MOVEMENT

The Imperium awakened a sleeping giant when its scouts made contact with the disparate pocket empires of the Solomani Rim. The people of the Arcturus Federation, Easter Concord, Vegan Polity, Dingir League and most importantly of all, the Old Earth Union, could hardly have known how much the far greater empire to coreward feared and dreaded a future in which the combined might of the Solomani Rim would be brought to bear against them as a unifying force. Shortly after the Imperial scouts made contact, haut-Devroe published the Solomani Hypothesis, expressing that not Vland, Shiwonee or any of the other poseurs were the birthplace of Humaniti. The evidence overwhelmingly proved beyond doubt that humans originally came from Terra.

The Solomani Hypothesis was barely noticed when it was first published. With the integration of the Rim, the hypothesis became a rallying cry that helped spawn the Solomani Movement. There was little the Imperium could do to prevent an eventual day of reckoning. The best the Emperor could hope for was to delay it and that is exactly what happened.

In the Solomani Autonomous Region, the core structure of Imperial rule was dismantled while the Imperium blithely looked on. In truth, there was little that could be done. A war-weary populace was loath to get into another major conflict so soon after the Civil War. The mixed results of the Pacification Campaigns hung over the Imperium like a spectre. While they had been successful by and large, most of the peerage felt that Artemsus' crowning achievement was a slap in the face to Cleon I, who advocated diplomacy, not force of arms, to incorporate worlds into the empire. Furthermore, the failure of the Antarean campaign would always haunt the Imperium. It was difficult to imagine overcoming a region with the size and power of the Solomani Sphere when the Imperium had failed to defeat the considerably smaller Julian Protectorate. However, the Imperial Navy had grown immensely in the intervening centuries. Mathematically speaking, the navy could take on just about any opponent if it set its collective mind to it but the public simply would not support such a bold, aggressive move. As so often happened in the history of Humaniti, it would require a crisis to push the Imperium over the edge and into conflict.

THE RISE OF THE SOLOMANI CONFEDERATION

DISSOLUTION OF THE NOBILITY

Noble patents are vacated. Hardliners come under fire from a hostile Solomani population.

- 716: The Archduke of the Domain of Sol dies. His seat is left vacant.
- 735: The Duke of Albadawi dies. His heir spurns the title and joins the Solomani Movement.
- 760: Most noble patents are vacated. Violent coups force many into exile. Some are recalled to Capital.

REVOLUTION

The Solomani Movement sweeps over the Rim.

- Pro-Imperial factions voted out, forced into exile or violently overthrown.
- 720: The Esperance World War: Majority-Vegan nation of Waothan defeated by Nueva Argentina. Waothanian Vegans become second-class citizens.
- 750: Government of Nusku overthrown by radical Solomani. Full citizenship granted only to genetically pure Solomani.
- 780: The Pontiffs of Tonopah join the Solomani Movement but preach that all sophonts are equal.
- 786: SolSec-supported rebels topple Jardin's government. The remaining systems in the subsector fall in line.
- 860: Momentum grows for the creation of a fully independent Solomani state.
- 871: The Solomani break the Peace of Ftahalr by settling worlds in the buffer zone.

THE NEVER IMPERIAL MOVEMENT

- The Imperial Civil War interrupted the full integration of the Solomani Rim.
- Border worlds forego Imperial membership for Solomani. The Movement spreads.

SOLOMANI CONFEDERATION

- The Solomani Autonomous Region secedes from the Imperium in 871, declaring the Solomani Confederation. The Imperium ignores the declaration.
- The Palace of the Secretary-General is completed on Terra in 876.
- Laurence Trinoch's *The Solomani Destiny* published on Home in Aldebaran in 881.

AND THE BAND PLAYED ON

Despite the imminent showdown with the Solomani Rim on the horizon, the Imperium as a whole was perhaps more stable than it had ever been. The Alkhalikoi Dynasty proved to be an enduring one.

The Scout Service, now ubiquitous in Imperial space, was further enhanced by the advent of the Detached Duty branch. One could muster out of the scouts but the scouts never truly mustered out of its former employees. A scout is a scout for life. To enhance its commitment to the reserves, the IISS developed a programme by which retired personnel could gain access to a scout/courier of their very own provided they respond to the summons of the Scout Service when required. In addition to providing a purpose for retired Type-S ships, the move made scout veterans into a de facto source of intelligence. Flitting about in their loaner starships, they collected data that might otherwise have been missed by intelligence agencies.

By 718, the Imperial X-boat Network had been expanded to cover all of Imperial space, ensuring that information travelled from one end of the Imperium to the other at jump-4 speed. While the prospect of governing such a vast expanse of space was and continues to be a daunting task, the Imperial X-boat Network ensures that its remote fiefs remain in communication with Capital.

Speaking of Capital, its grandiosity continued to grow. The Grand Palace of Arbellatra acquired several annexes. In 729, Empress Margaret had the Consortium Trinary built, a trio of smaller spheres that would appear to 'orbit' the Grand Palace. The three spheres contained museums dedicated to the Ziru Sirka, Rule of Man and Third Imperium, respectively. Access to the public was limited but the Trinary was made available to academics year round.

Tragically, Empress Margaret died in a tunnel collapse while visiting the Imperial Reserve World of Onon in 736. Margaret's reign was unremarkable on the whole, remembered more as an era of stability than for grand achievements. Her twin brother, Paulo, was confirmed by the Moot as the new Emperor. Margaret left no heir, which could have caused a dynastic crisis but Paulo was so well-suited to the crown that he was an easy choice for the Moot. He was educated, erudite and well-prepared for the role despite having suffered the cruel hand of fate by being born a mere 22 minutes after his twin sister.

Paulo's reign was similar to that of Margaret. He continued to cultivate relationships with the peerage and kept the peace on Imperial borders, most notably with the Zhodani Consulate. Other than putting down a few minor revolts, Paulo did not embroil the Imperium in conflicts. In 740, he left his mark on Capital, adding yet another annex to the Grand Palace. Paulo's Annex was a pleasure palace, a place where visitors could indulge in myriad forms of entertainment. Fine dining, the performing arts, sporting events and countless other diversions were featured. Beginning in 740 the annex would serve as the primary site of the Emperor's Games, a decennial sporting event.

The greater inclusion of Vilani nobles in the Moot and promotion of their cultural principles was a key component in this era of prosperity and stability. If there was one thing the Vilani were good at, it was running a bureaucracy. Paulo was a great student of Imperial history and the parallels of his era and that of the Ziru Sirka before its fall were not lost upon him. He certainly did not want to see the growing Third Imperium fall to the burgeoning threat of the Solomani, just as the Ziru Sirka had fallen to the Terran Confederation thousands of years before. The Imperium was not yet ready to confront the Solomani crisis directly. Instead, he simply shepherded the empire along its current course.

Emperor Paulo died of natural causes in 767, and his son, Tomutov, ascended to the throne. Alas, the weight of the crown was too much for Tomutov, who abdicated after two years. His sole legacy was the construction of Tomutov's Palace, another annex to the Grand Palace. Tomutov's Palace was a place of welcome, where esteemed visitors to Capital could stay when they came to see the Emperor.

Tomutov's oldest offspring ascended to the throne as Paula II in 768, beginning another era of steady Alkhalikoi rule. Paula was only 16 when she took the throne but took to the role quickly. Her first test of leadership would come a mere four years into her reign.

THE PSIONIC SUPPRESSIONS

In 772, it was discovered that many of the Imperium's 65 chartered psionic institutes had been infiltrated by the Zhodani Consulate. For most of Imperial history, psionics had been looked upon as an oddity of sorts. While the practice of psionics was never fully embraced in the Imperium, there had been psionics clubs and psionicology university programmes since the age of the Sylean Federation. Prior to the formation of the Third Imperium, there were even worlds governed by psionic leaders.

Psions occupied many useful roles throughout the Imperium, often serving as valuable aides to the Emperor, members of the Moot and megacorporate officers. There were even specialised psionic soldiers in service to the military and intelligence agencies. The discovery that just a portion of them had been infiltrated by the Zhodani set loose a wave of hysteria. The scandals extended to all levels of society and Imperial citizens began to question whether their leaders at all levels had been compromised by mind-controlling psions. The xenophobic fear of the Zhodani was just one aspect of the crisis. People began to question the financial, ethical and moral implications of the use of psionics. Were the markets fair or were they manipulated by telepaths and clairvoyants? Was it right for a powerful noble to use a psion to read the minds of his political adversaries or to manipulate public sentiment in his favour? Were the nobility the puppets of psions? The practice of psionics, which had become an accepted, if somewhat obscure, part of Imperial society was now being questioned at all levels.

The scandals went on for decades, coming to a head in 792 when the pro-Zhodani government of Attica in the Spinward Marches came under fire. Members of the public asserted that Zhodani-trained psions had manipulated the outcome of what were supposedly free elections. Attica became a lightning rod for growing anti-psionic sentiments and quickly descended into chaos as protests against the government became violent. Elected officials invited Zhodani peace-keeping troops to restore order and an Imperial Navy squadron blockaded the world in response to the Zhodani incursion. The government fell before things got further out of control and both the Zhodani and Imperium withdrew. As news of these events swept across the Imperium, anti-psionic fervour grew.

In 800, Empress Paula II signed the first of 65 suppression orders for all psionic institutes operating within Imperial space. All of the institutes were ordered to cease operations and training programmes immediately. The hysteria carried over the border into the Solomani Autonomous Region where a similar anti-psionic pogrom took place. By 826, all of the institutes had their charters revoked and practicing psions were forced underground.

While the Psionic Suppressions garnered massive public support, not everyone was quite so sanguine about the whole affair. The Imperial megacorporation SuSAG had a highly profitable psionic drug business and was badly affected by the suppressions. Sympathetic members of the peerage – especially those who held SuSAG stock – pleaded for exemptions that would save the company from suffering more damage to its finances and public image. There was also the matter of psionically sensitive alien races. There were several Minor Races within Imperial borders whose rights were oppressed as a direct result of their use of psionics. In addition, the Droyne had just been declared a Major Race in 790 after a consortium of archaeologists, historians and xenobiologists determined that their scattered populations were a single species. The fact that Droyne civilisation was based on the use of psionics did not play in their favour. The IISS promptly interdicted the worlds of Andor and Candory in the Five Sisters subsector of the Spinward Marches, which were considered to be possible homeworlds of the Droyne. The Imperial Navy sent a follow-up mission to secure the subsector.

The Psionic Suppressions were highly successful. Those who still practiced psionics had to do so in private, sliding into a dangerous and hostile underworld. The Suppressions were the signature achievement of Paula II but some wondered whether the Imperium had gone too far. The public had been gripped by mass hysteria, so easily condemning an element of society that had long been thought benign.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

At the conclusion of the Psionic Suppressions, there were numerous conspiracy theories about who the 'real' culprits were. Many theorised that the Zhodani were an all-too-convenient bad guy and that their base of power was far too remote to have infiltrated the Imperium so completely. Some of the more popular conspiracy theories included the following:

- The Imperium got tricked into getting rid of their psionic institutes by SolSec.
- The Psionic Suppressions were a Hiver manipulation.
- The Zhodani were indeed the culprits, but the primary bad actors were from a Consulate client state in The Beyond sector.
- None of the institutes were actually closed. A psionic manipulation prevented the closures from happening. They were moved, though, to hide them from public view.

None of these were true, of course, but the last one came the closest. Two psionic institutes remained open after the Psionic Suppressions ended. They were on Regina and Terra, both kept open by the Imperial Department of Defence. The institute on Regina was eventually moved to Wypoc in Lanth, but the one on Terra is still there.

Of all the theories that came about, the one that gained the most traction came nearly two centuries after the fact. In his book, *Almost Disaster*, Imperial Historian Albert Croale posited that the Psionic Suppressions were a psychohistorical manipulation designed to eliminate the growing power of the psionic institutes. In the text, he surmised that they worked too well, making it impossible for the Imperium to continue using psionics in any capacity. Croale also said that a straight examination of the psychohistorical mathematics indicated that the Third Frontier War, which did not occur until 979, should have actually happened in the late 700s, but that the Psionic Suppressions effectively delayed the war for 200 years.

PROJECT LONGBOW

For reasons that were mysterious at the time, the Empress initiated a covert project in 830 called Project Longbow or more accurately, LongBOW (Long Baseline Observation Window). The goal of the project was to create an immense radar telescope, 46 billion kilometres in diameter, with its collector plane at the Lishun Depot. The purpose of the elaborate device was to view the galactic core where the Zhodani had been sending expeditions for centuries. Rumour had it that deep Imperial scouting missions had discovered something wrong far beyond the Zhodani Consulate and Vargr Extents borders. While any data received would be centuries old, it would give the Imperium time to prepare for what, if anything, might come their way. The project was not completed until 940.

PRELUDE TO WAR

Empress Paula II died of natural causes in 836, leaving the throne to her third child, who was crowned Tomutova II. Paula had held the Imperium together through a crisis and it was now time for her daughter to see it through yet another challenging phase of history. Tomutova's reign was almost deliberately bland with its only notable event being the creation of the Imperial Academy of Science and Medicine in the Core in 845. A seemingly innocuous development, the creation of the IASM is now greatly credited for the advancement of technology that gave the Imperium the upper hand in its upcoming conflict with the Solomani Autonomous Region.

Tomutova, like many Empresses and Emperors before her, was an avid adherent of psychohistory. She was confident that the hand she played would enable the Imperium to win its eventual conflict with the Solomani. She also knew that it would occur long after her death but in Tomutova's mind the outcome was certain. It was satisfying enough to know that she played her part, preparing and arming for the conflict to come despite having to endure the lashes of public opinion as one system after another fell to the Solomani.

Tomutova died in 908, passing the torch to her oldest child, who was crowned Margaret II. The Alkhalikois continued to play the long game and a succession of wise rulers paved the way towards a psychohistory-guaranteed victory over the Solomani. This was a game the Imperium had been preparing for since Artemsus wisely resisted the temptation to integrate Terra in the early 200s. Every psychohistorical prediction that included the too-early incorporation of Terra had set off alarm bells and changed the maths for the entire Imperial project. Like Napoleon escaping from Elba, Terra was an old conqueror that would have to be put in its place before peace could finally be had.

Empress Margaret patiently watched as the upstart Solomani Confederation – which remained unrecognised by the Imperium – continued to spread the Solomani Movement among its worlds and threatened to spill over the border into Imperial space. By 920, she began to receive appeals for protection by worlds that had remained loyal to the Imperium. In response, she made several demands of the Solomani – taking great care to only indirectly address the Solomani Party Secretariat and its Secretary-General – ratcheting up the tension. The Imperium, she said, would not be intimidated or cowed from protecting Imperial citizens. She dispatched naval squadrons to secure worlds along the borders of the Solomani Autonomous Region. This stoked the fury of the Solomani Confederation but there was little that they could do at this point.

By 938, skirmishes between Imperial and Solomani naval squadrons had begun to flare up in the Daibei, Diaspora and Old Expanses sectors. The Solomani Movement had become fractious and the Imperium sowed division between factions where it could. The success of Imperial forces garnered more defections to the Imperial side and, in a few cases, bold members of the peerage returned to administer worlds that had been previously lost. Fearing the advancement of the Solomani Movement might be halted by Imperial incursions, the Confederation issued a formal complaint to the Empress that she was violating the tenets of the Mandate of 704. After months of silence, the Empress responded by revoking the Mandate and ordering the immediate reintegration of the Solomani Autonomous Region into the Imperium in late 940. The drums of war began to beat ever louder.

Like her mother before her, Margaret had trained her heir since birth to prepare for this moment. Margaret had grown old and infirm and suspected that Tomolin would be the Empress whose role it would be to pacify the Solomani. Alas, Tomolin died in 944 after exposure to an alien pathogen. Margaret feared that this single event might derail centuries of planning. Tomolin's son Styryx, then an officer in the Imperial Marines, was headstrong and had many connections with Solomani factions in the military. She was leery about whether her grandson could be depended upon to properly execute the plan but psychohistoric predictions rarely depend upon a single individual, even if that person is the Emperor. Margaret died in 945, secure in her belief that the Imperium would prevail despite her concerns.

Emperor Styryx inherited an Imperium primed for war. Along the Imperial-Solomani border, worlds changed hands between the two sides with a net gain going to the Imperium. Meanwhile, in the Spinward Marches, commerce raiding along the coreward border by Zhodani and Vargr starships had reached epidemic levels. One would think that the Emperor would have heeded the lessons of the past by paying closer attention to events in the Marches but Styryx was obsessed with the Solomani crisis.

Styryx and his wife were quick to produce an heir, Gavin, born in 946, just one year after Styryx's ascension to the throne. Styryx was young, healthy and hale after his brief career in the marines and expected to have a long life but now was not the time for the Imperium to suffer a dynastic crisis should anything happen to him.

He fostered the growth of the IASM, extending it to 31 campuses throughout Imperial space. The Imperium was driving hard toward a heretofore unseen Tech Level 15 with early prototypes of weapons, electronics and starships already in circulation.

As tensions continued to rise, Styryx stoked the flames by appointing a naval commission in 970 to 'manage' the Solomani Autonomous Region, a sure-fire sign that an invasion was being planned. He channelled the majority of the Imperial military budget to the navy at the expense of the other services, creating a stir in the joint command structure. Senior officers of the army and marines questioned how they were supposed to secure Solomani worlds in the upcoming war without proper funding. Styryx also poked the Solomani beehive by making post-war plans for the region. In 975, a well-appointed task force from the diplomatic corps laid the groundwork for a Vegan Autonomous District. Up to this point, the Solomani had been able to focus on the coreward front. By offering pre-emptive concessions to the Vegans, the Emperor had the Solomani looking over their shoulders as well.

INTERLUDE: THIRD FRONTIER WAR

With the Imperium almost completely focused on the Solomani front, yet another Outworld Coalition, led by the Zhodani Consulate, launched a surprise attack in the Spinward Marches in 979. The Coalition fleets concentrated their initial attacks on the Efate, Boughene and Pixie systems in an attempt to cut off Jewell and Querion. The Vargr aided in the attacks but focused on commerce raiding to keep Imperial auxiliary forces busy. Deep strikes by the Zhodani established a narrow corridor through Vilis and Lanth, preventing the easy transit of Imperial forces through the region. This would normally have been the province of the Sword Worlds who – suffering through a constitutional crisis – sat this war out.

Just as it had in previous Frontier Wars, the Imperium found itself caught off balance and inadequately prepared. In 980, the Coalition established a foothold on Jae Tellona and Porozlo fell to their forces after a major invasion. Porozlo would serve as a marshalling point for a relentless assault on Rhylanor that lasted the duration of the war.

The attacks and raids by the Coalition reached their apex in 981, allowing the Zhodani to make territorial gains in Jewell and Querion. The war was a disaster for the Imperium. Coalition forces were forced to withdraw from the battle for Rhylanor after the arrival of Imperial reinforcements from the Deneb Sector Fleet and the 194th Fleet out of Sabine but by then the damage was done. At the end of the war, the Imperium ceded systems in both Jewell and Querion, and was forced to demilitarise portions of Vilis under the terms of the Armistice. Quar was made an independent world though its Imperial Navy base remained intact. Likewise, the research station at Retinae was retained. Arden was spun off into an independent world that then reached out to neighbouring worlds to initiate the creation of a neutral federation, eventually becoming a buffer state between the Imperium and Zhodani Consulate.

Imperial forces had taken heavy casualties, far more than in any of the previous Frontier Wars. In one of the more egregious incidents of the war, the entire 910th Imperial Marine Regiment was lost in action. It was scandalous that for the third time in Imperial history, the Spinward Marches had been left to its own devices after being brazenly attacked by the Zhodani and their allies. In 989, the military and its supporters in the Moot had had enough. With the support of the military joint command structure, Imperial Guard General Nicolai Dienne staged a palace coup to overthrow Styryx. Only the Scout Guard remained loyal to the Emperor but they were quickly defeated by the Aslan Guard who took point during the assault. Styryx, who was found hiding in a fresher, surrendered and consented to abdicate the throne in favour of his son, Gavin.

Gavin's first major act as Emperor was to commission the Scout Service to begin its Second Survey of Imperial space in 990. The maps and demographic data collected during the First Survey had become obsolete. He instructed the scouts to save the Solomani sectors for last since its borders, he confidently assured them, would soon be changing. The event was commemorated with the introduction of a new starship class: the *Donosev*-class survey ship, named for Villemina Donosev, the Master Chief Surveyor who was famous for having published the First Survey in 420. Subsequent starships in the class would be named for other famous scouts.

One of Gavin's final pre-war acts was to disband the Solomani Regiment of the Imperial Guard, vowing to reinstate it after the crisis in the Rim was addressed.

BROTHER VS. BROTHER

Leule left Exage on a liner bound for Asmera at the crack of dawn. He spent all of his scholarship money on a mid passage. Mother and Father refused to see him off but I went. I didn't want my last memory of him to be the angry shouting match at the dinner table the night before. When I begged him to reconsider, he just spouted more of that Solomani Movement stuff. About how being of Solomani blood makes you special and how you have a unique destiny. The last straw for him was when Mr. Dimaakhuna assigned him to lathing duty at the plant. Leule said he couldn't stand another day of working for that Vilani... well, I don't want to repeat the next word. It's impolite and besides, I always thought Mr. Dimaakhuna was a fair and reasonable boss.

From Asmera, he was supposed to catch a transport to Burlta where Solomani forces had recently taken over. After Emperor Styryx abdicated, the Imperial Navy pulled out and the Solomani moved in. Leule said he would pledge himself to the Movement there, hoping to join one of the more extreme factions. Our family had roots in the Old Expanses dating back

to the Rule of Man. I tried to convince Leule that there was no way he could know if we were really 'genetically pure' Solomani or not. Our homeworld was a place where Vilani and Solomani had mixed for thousands of years. The tests were inconclusive but he said he could feel it in his blood that he was 'pure'.

Military service is mandatory on Exage and I got conscripted into the army in 989, right before the Rim War. I was assigned to mobile infantry. I was one of the 'boots on the ground' as they say. The Imperial Navy comes in, beats up enemy squadrons, the marines hit the ground first and then we come in on transports to secure and hold the place down. I fought in the Battle of Martham Prime in the first year of the war. Things didn't go well early on and we got pushed back. The thought of retreating to my homeworld and defending it against Solomani invaders terrified me. The idea that Mother, Father and our younger sister would be endangered kept me up at night.

Eventually things turned around and we started winning. I was a sergeant in 998 when we had made it all the way to Desel. By then, my little sister was a midshipman in the Imperial Navy. At the time, I wondered if my sister and I ever fought in the same star system but after the war, we checked and we were never closer than 10 parsecs from each other. As for Leule, I never saw him again. I heard that he fought in the Battle of Gresham, where I was stationed for a while, but even although I tried, I couldn't find him. I will always wonder what happened to him.

THE SOLOMANI RIM WAR

Distraction and indecision followed the Imperial defeat in the Third Frontier War. After the coup, abdication of Styryx and quick ascension of Gavin, the Imperial fleets were temporarily ordered to stand down and await further instructions. News takes time to travel across the broad expanse of the Imperium but once couriers had made it to the front, the subsequent pause allowed the Solomani to retaliate and regain most of the worlds they had recently lost. The Imperium declared that this would not stand and declared war on the Solomani Confederation in 990.

In the early battles of the war, things went poorly for the Imperium. The massed Solomani fleets and ground forces repelled the Imperial advance and actually ended up conquering several worlds that had never previously been a part of the Solomani Confederation. After three years of war the Imperium had suffered a net loss of worlds. Emboldened by their success, the Solomani attempted to regain lost territory in the Old Expanses only to be sharply rebuffed, especially on worlds with large Vilani populations. Now firmly in the Imperial camp, the Old Expanses Sector Fleet delivered a devastating blow to the Solomani, inflicting heavy losses that prevented them from going on the offensive for almost the entirety of the war.

The two sides were stalemated for the next five years, neither gaining significant ground on the other. The Solomani had become obsessed with the defence of every single world along the border, precariously stretching their forces in the process. Meanwhile, the Imperial Navy was in a period of rapid technological advancement, moving to TL15 and improving its fleets to a jump-4 standard. By 998, the Imperium was prepared to prosecute the war with great alacrity.

Grand Admiral Baroness Arielle Adair massed the Imperial fleets and proceeded into the Solomani Confederation in two distinct columns, conquering hundreds of worlds and carving a crescent of star systems within the Solomani sphere. By 1001, the worlds of the former Vegan Polity had been liberated. Having long been oppressed by the Solomani, the Vegans made natural allies for the Imperium. They welcomed their liberators and invited them to establish permanent bases on their worlds from which they could continue their long march into Solomani space.

Admiral Ivan Wolfe took charge of the Solomani Grand Fleet and prepared for a last-ditch effort to preserve the heart of the Confederation. 'Grand' may have been a bit of a misnomer. After four years of retreat, what was left was a ragtag assemblage of capital ships bolstered by replacements from the rimward shipyards. The Solomani had been hard-pressed to keep up their fleets under persistent assault from the larger, more advanced Imperial fleets. Jump-4 capability enabled Imperial squadrons to leapfrog the front lines to decimate Solomani reinforcement fleets and auxiliaries before returning to the front.

Despite the attrition the Solomani fleets had suffered, Wolfe managed to inflict major damage on the Imperial 17th Fleet at Agidda before moving on to attempt a similar attack on the 1st Fleet in the Vegan District. However, the reconstituted 17th Fleet regrouped and proceeded to Dingir where it delivered decisive blows on Wolfe's rear guard, cutting off his fleet's supply lines and essentially destroying its ability to function. Wolfe was forced to withdraw and was harried by the Imperial 1st Fleet during his retreat to Aldebaran.

Imperial High Command rallied its forces for the final assault on Terra. With 14 squadrons and five army corps, the Imperium engaged in an assault that lasted nearly six months. Things became so desperate that the Imperium considered using nuclear weapons late in the battle but cooler heads prevailed. By the end of the battle, the Imperium had landed over two million troops on the surface of Terra. Late in 1102, the Solomani surrendered the world and an armistice was signed. While no formal peace agreement was ever signed, the Imperium managed to conquer and occupy approximately 25 percent of the Solomani Autonomous Region

TEST OF LOYALTY

Pureblood and mixed-heritage Solomani occupied many stations in the Imperium. Prior to the Alkhalikoi Dynasty, the Solomani dominated the Moot and composed most of the Imperial Navy High Command. There were some defections to the Solomani Confederation but the vast majority remained loyal to the Imperium. By the time of the Solomani Rim War, the Imperium was nearly 1,000 years old and it had been two and a half millennia since the fall of the Rule of Man. While vague notions of loyalty to Mother Terra existed, new and more lasting loyalties to the Third Imperium had taken their place for most humans of Solomani descent.

Many found the Solomani Movement to be distasteful. Adherents of the movement declared that it was not just humans but only Solomani humans whose destiny it was to rule the stars. The Imperium had long moved on from such notions. In the Declaration of 17, Emperor Cleon I had declared that Imperial citizenship was extended to all sophonts. Furthermore, the Imperium had already been a hybrid state of Solomani, Vilani and, of course, Syleans even before Cleon's declaration. The Imperium had come to include Aslan, Vargr and dozens of Minor Races among its citizenry as well. Aslan served in the Imperial Guard. A Vargr had been appointed Archduke of Antares. The notion of Solomani supremacy seemed barbaric and outdated to most Imperial citizens no matter their heritage.

By the late 900s, the Imperium had a great deal of momentum. It had been centuries since it went through the crucible of the Civil War. The stable Alkhalikoi Dynasty – whose matriarch Arbellatra was herself Solomani in origin – had established over three centuries of stable rule. While many Solomani had balked at the greater inclusion of Vilani nobles in the Moot, the origins and power structure of the Third Imperium were still very much rooted in Solomani traditions and culture. To many of Solomani origin, the Imperium was thought of as the far-more-effective successor state to the Rule of Man.

One of the more understated subtexts of the Imperial narrative was its advancement of technology. Before the Rim War, the Imperium was on the fast track to TL15, two full levels over that of the front-line Solomani. Coupled with the growing wealth of its worlds and its vast trade routes, it was difficult to argue with the pre-eminence of Imperial power. It was hard to recruit defectors from a side whose progress and growth was so clear for all to see. There may have been Solomani sympathisers among the ranks but there were simply too many reasons to remain loyal to the Third Imperium for most of them to switch sides.

where they remain to the current day. The defeated Solomani Confederation relocated its capital to Home in Aldebaran. Admiral Wolfe stationed his fleet there and was elected Secretary-General.

THE CLASSIC ERA

With the return of peace to the Imperium, Emperor Gavin restored the Order of Sol (after first degrading it in precedence) and appointed Admiral Adair as the new Archduchess of Sol in 1003. The archduchess at first administered the affairs of the domain from Muan Gwi, elevating the standing of the Vegans to new heights and then eventually moved her offices to the sector capital at Dingir. The manor of the Secretary-General on Terra was converted into a centre for diplomacy, dedicated to finding peaceful solutions to all of the issues that the Imperials and Solomani had with one another. Adair got started with the long and arduous task of re-establishing the peerage in the Domain of Sol and extricating Solomani Movement cells from the hundreds of worlds that were now under the Imperial aegis.

Adair formed the Vegan Autonomous District in 1004, cementing the loyalty of a key Solomani Rim constituent and establishing a firm base of power in the centre of the sector. In 1005, the archduchess created the Order of Muan Gwi, which was used to recruit honourable Vegans to the ranks of the nobility.

Adair and Wolfe, once adversaries on the battlefield, now began a long, cold stare down across the border between the two polities. The Solomani established a new reserve, the Home Guard, in 1005 to serve as the front line of defence for the depleted Confederation. Solar Shipping, the Solomani megacorporation, cancelled all lines in the occupied zone. At first there was very little trans-border activity between the two polities but it proved impossible to prevent all travel. Separated families had to be reunited, certain types of property had to be returned and basic diplomatic communication was restored.

The battle lines may have been drawn but the two sides had little interest in renewing the conflict. The Solomani had scant hope of removing an entrenched and powerful Imperium. They would have to be satisfied that their Confederation remained largely intact even if they had lost Terra and other key worlds. The vast Imperium had other fish to fry. It ready time to finally give the frontier its due. The Spinward Marches was the vanguard of Imperial expansion and after three Frontier Wars, it was high time that the region received some attention.

A fortuitous development of the Gavinian Age was the advent of the Authentic Movement. The principles of the movement were developed in 988 by Dr. Johann Kramm at a university on Shudusham, only four parsecs from Capital. This movement posited that the human spirit was diminished in high-technology societies but that it could be replenished by celebrating one or more of the myriad cultures of Charted Space, both current or historical. People were encouraged to select a culture, study it with great detail and express themselves through its lens. Wearing the unique dress of the culture, learning its language, reading its literature and serving as a sort of volunteer ombudsman for the culture were deemed to be activities that would renew the human spirit. The Authentic Movement became a sensation in the Core and began to spread to neighbouring sectors as well.

The Authentic Movement reached the Solomani Rim by 1010 and received a frosty welcome by occupying Imperial forces and the renascent peerage. There were concerns that it might foment rebellion among Solomani citizens who had just come to terms with the occupation. As it turned out, the effect was quite the opposite. Many of the people of the Rim acquired a newfound tolerance and respect for other cultures by participating in the movement. By 1050, the movement had acquired as much popularity in the Rim as anywhere else in Imperial space. While many Solomani people selected Terran, Rule of Man and Old Earth Union cultures to emulate, a significant percentage of the population chose cultures well outside those boundaries. Some even chose Vilani cultures. The Authentic Movement helped to pacify the Solomani Rim and eased the integration of the occupied worlds into the Imperium.

Upon Gavin's death in 1031, the throne was passed to his oldest issue who was crowned Paulo III. Paulo inherited a stable Imperium and dedicated his reign to the maintenance of peace. The Meson Rebellion of 1032 on Khikaba took 12 years to put down by depleted naval forces but the outcome was never in doubt and the sentiments expressed by the rebels were kept from spreading to neighbouring star systems. By 1045, Imperial intelligence agents had ferreted out the last remnants of the Phoenix Project, a Solomani resistance movement on Terra. The Imperial occupation force ingratiated itself with the locals by participating in relief, preservation and reconstruction programs. The occupiers sought to integrate themselves with Terran culture, becoming Terrans themselves as best they could. By 1050, all remaining fringe resistance movements had been

brought to the negotiating table and pacified. This event was celebrated by the reestablishment of the Solomani Guard Regiment on Capital. Paulo wanted his time as Emperor to be remembered as another glorious period of peace and economic growth. Any problems that came up were handled as efficiently as possible and without fanfare.

Paulo's wife Elbet gave birth to their first child, Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi, in 1049. At the age of 58, Paulo was old for a first-time parent but he was far from a doting one. Strephon was the heir that the Imperium demanded but he meant little else to his father. Strephon's sister, Lydia, was born three years later in 1052 and was equally neglected. Unfortunately, Empress Elbet died under mysterious circumstances in 1053, leaving her two toddlers motherless. Paulo's brother, James, was implicated in Elbet's death but committed suicide within the year, before he could be properly tried for his involvement. With their mother dead and their father indisposed with the burdens of rulership, Strephon and Lydia did not even have each other to rely on, as they lived very separate lives and were only brought together when Imperial events required it. The two were raised more by their tutors than any member of the Imperial family.

One of the final acts of Paulo's reign was the completion of the Second Grand Survey in 1065. The 75-year project was completed in the Reference system when data from the survey was downloaded to newly installed TL15 computer substrates on the planet. The transportation of all new relics and artefacts to the Reference archives was completed by 1068. Paulo basked in the glory of his achievements, having stewarded the Imperium through difficult post-war years. He died a contented man in 1071.

STREPHON ASCENDANT

Unlike so many of his predecessors in the Alkhalikoi line, Strephon was ill-prepared for the throne. Serving as a midshipman in the Imperial Navy, Strephon was called home when his father had been reported ill; he arrived on Capital three days after his father's death. Only 21 years old at the time of his coronation, Strephon had a lot of catching up to do. He had hoped to have an illustrious naval career before ascending to the throne but fate dictated otherwise. He spent his early years as Emperor learning what he would need to know to rule wisely. Unlike many of his ancestors, Strephon had very little tutelage from his predecessor.

Hoping to produce an heir more promptly than his father had, Strephon married Iolanthe Guuilbataashullibaa in 1079. Iolanthe was the daughter of the senior duke of Gushemege and reaffirmed the commitment of the Alkhalikoi line to incorporate Vilani blood into its heritage. Times had changed. When Zhakirov married Antiama exactly 400 years earlier, the powerful Solomani bloc in the Moot were up in arms. The Solomani Rim War and subsequent Authentic Movement had changed the Imperial mindset. At long last the Imperium had come to terms with its complex historical legacy.

Better educated, and by many accounts more intelligent than her husband, Iolanthe became a close partner and valuable counsel. Strephon was lucky to have her. His reign was about to face its first major challenge. An incident at the Quar system of the Spinward Marches in 1082 sparked the Fourth Frontier War, resulting in numerous naval battles in Jewell and Cronor. Its final conflict was the Battle of Two Suns, fought in the depths of space between the Yres and Menorb systems. Losses to both sides were so devastating that both Imperium and Zhodani Consulate forces sued for peace. The fighting lasted only 18 months before an armistice was signed in 1084, causing the war to be nicknamed the 'False War'. By the time word had arrived at Capital, the fighting was essentially over. Nevertheless, clever messaging was devised to make Strephon look like a highly capable commander-in-chief. As had so often been the case with the Frontier Wars, a few systems changed hands and things returned to the status quo.

A few short years after the war, the Emperor and Empress produced an heir to the throne. Ciencia Iphegenia, Grand Princess of the Imperium, was born in 1088, extending the Alkhalikoi Line.

1105

There are pregnant moments in history that, unbeknownst to those living in them, are on the verge of unleashing a torrent of changes and events that will reshape the very fabric of society, redefining and rearranging things so drastically that they became virtually unrecognisable thereafter. The year 1105 is just such a moment. The Imperium is about to experience a number of events that will forever change it.

The tension between the Imperium, the Zhodani and their Outworld Coalition allies has shown no signs of abating. The Imperium hopes to be prepared for subsequent Frontier Wars better than it has been

before. There is reason for hope. The Imperial Navy is devising plans that should guarantee the security of the Domain of Deneb. However, it will require strong and capable leaders to carry it out. Duke Norris Aella Aledon of Regina might be just the man for the job. The Emperor sees a kindred spirit in the Duke and hopes to make his acquaintance eventually. Strephon is less inclined towards the senior Duchess of the Marches, Delphine Adoriana Muudashir. Born in 979, the august Duchess Delphine was a child during the Solomani Rim War and was knighted to the Order of Starship and Crown in 1018 by Strephon's grandfather, Gavin. Regardless of their shared history, Strephon and Delphine have little in common. He has privately remarked that she seems a bit too devoted to her protégé, Admiral Frederick Santanocheev. Now, nearly 126 years old, the duchess' ambitions seem to be at odds with those of Norris.

The Domain of Deneb is the future of the Imperium and Strephon means to serve it and its people far better than previous Emperors have. The first Alkhalikoi came from Rhylanor in the Spinward Marches and Strephon intends to honour the memory of Arbellatra by being a better custodian of his ancestral homeland. To this end, Imperial naval strategists have adopted a new 'elastic defence' strategy in which colonial reserves are strengthened and more powerful reinforcements are stationed nearby in Corridor. Should another Frontier War occur, the colonial forces need only hold on until messengers can retrieve the larger, more powerful fleet elements from Corridor, which will arrive in the nick of time to vanquish the enemy. The Imperium has also committed to the concept of the battle rider, sublight capital ships attached to massive jump tenders. By not installing jump drives on these spacecraft, they can be packed with more ammunition and weaponry than jump-capable naval ships.

The pace of innovation is reaching new levels. Several Imperial worlds are now striving to achieve TL16. The naval weapons research facility on Sabsee has developed a more powerful small arm: the FGMP-16. On Ye-lu and Celetron, experiments in artificial intelligence are creating fully independent systems and robots that promise to bring new levels of processing speed and efficiency to Imperial worlds. Imperial Research Station Zeta on Pashus in Deneb is close to making a breakthrough in jump technology. Meanwhile, Vincennes, also in Deneb, has standardised at TL16, particularly in the realms of communications and electronics.

LONGBOW II

Unbeknownst to the rank and file of the Imperium, Emperor Strephon commissioned the highly confidential Project Longbow II in 1103. The previous Longbow had a much smaller scope. This new phase of the project professes to use the entire width of the Imperium as its long baseline, using jump-6 couriers to carry collected data to Depot in Lishun.

Elsewhere there are other problems to contend with. While the Battle of Terra ended the Solomani Rim War a century ago and the Imperium has done a fine job of integrating the worlds that it conquered, the enemy is only a few parsecs away. While the Solomani are still technologically inferior to the Imperium, there are highly motivated zealots within their ranks. It would be unwise to underestimate them. There is unfinished business in the Solomani Rim and it remains to be seen which side has the vitality and determination to win should another major conflict arise in the region. Since 1095, the Solomani Party has again been allowed to operate on Terra. Considered a dangerous move by some, the Imperium believes that after a century, the occupied worlds have learned the benefits of Imperial membership. Greater pluralism has been allowed so that peace may continue.

While the Imperium has its jump-4 x-boat network, and the navy its jump-6 courier system to communicate urgent issues, Emperor Strephon still fears a fragmentation of the empire. Cleon's dream of a loyal, honourable and dutiful feudal nobility seems to be working as intended but there is reason to be concerned. Strephon is afraid that the disparate regions of the Imperium desire more localised government to better serve their needs. He is staunchly committed to a unified empire and seeks ways to enhance the bonds that the domains have with Capital. To this end, he has appointed progressive archdukes such as Dulinor Astrin Ilethian, men and women who he believes share his vision and know how best to serve their domains, all the while maintaining their commitment to the Imperium as a whole.

CORE SECTOR

Visitors to Core often find that it is not at all what they expected. There is a common misconception that the entire sector is one big, crowded extension of Capital, that all of its inhabitants are exorbitantly wealthy with robots and computers running every aspect of their lives and that Imperial patriotism runs thicker than blood in their veins. While there certainly is wealth to be had in the Core, and Capital does wield a wide sphere of influence, not every world is a bastion of technological development, covered in arcologies and industry, nor does everyone fly the Imperial flag with nationalist zealotry. It is quite the opposite in many ways. Core is in fact a disparate and diverse place where individualism runs rampant and there is little in the way of consistency or uniformity. This is by design, if one can truly say that controlled chaos is something to which the greatest interstellar empire in history aspires. The Imperium is working as intended.

For those who never manage to travel to the Core, the myths remain larger than life. This sector is thought to be a magical place, a hallowed region of space as unattainable as it is distant. While millions of sophonts travel among the stars at some point in time, the fact is that most remain on their worlds of origin for the duration of their lives. To a belter in the Empty Quarter, a merchant in the Spinward Marches or a starport administrator in the Solomani Rim, the Core is just a place seen in holovideos or read about in daily news feeds. Some Travellers dream of seeing its wonders for a lifetime but only a privileged few actually make the long journey to the Core and Capital, perhaps affording them a visit to the Grand Palace of Arbellatra itself.

The reality is that the Core is much like any other Imperial sector. It is a wealthy sector but not the wealthiest. It is populous but not the most populated. It has technological wonders aplenty but there are worlds elsewhere in the Imperium that have achieved levels beyond those of the Core. The sector certainly has a distinct character and unique features. It is home to Capital where the current and all former Emperors have sat upon the Iridium Throne and where the nobility meet at the Moot Spire. It is home to Reference, a world dedicated to the retention of all information ever collected by Humaniti. Some of the most powerful starships in existence have been built at its Imperial Navy Depot in a star system that was touched by the Ancients. Even after over 1,000 years, the Core's economy is among the mightiest in the Imperium. More goods are exported from its industrial worlds than from those of any other sector.

The Sylean Main is the Core's richest trade route, connecting Capital to the majority of the sector. Achenaar Antilles currently dominates shipping in the sector but the megacorporate lines are engaged with them in fierce economic combat for control of the sector's rich export business. While the big corporations duke it out for control, there is plenty of business for enterprising free traders to make a living.

Several alien races hail from the Core, including the Ssienjhiovla, an aquatic species who have integrated themselves into Imperial society and the sagely but bloviating Bhu'oovaakaylaa, large and phlegmatic and virtually unseen beyond the confines of their homeworld. The Oo-ne-beto-pon-tee or 'whistlers' as some call them, a strange and potentially dangerous species, are under the watchful eye of the Imperial Navy on the isolated world of Night. Their ability to affect the minds of their human cohabitants is cause for concern. The dead race known as the Shingans were wiped from existence nearly 800 years ago, allegedly for having similar abilities. A recently discovered race called the Ganmeids have been found in the oceans of the windswept world of Indshiim Ganme, a mere seven parsecs from Capital. The Core is also home to several human Minor Races, none more famous or influential than the Syleans, whose unique philosophy enabled Humaniti to arise from the ashes of the Long Night.

Despite the presence of many human and alien races, the Vilani and Solomani have by far had the greatest impact on the sector. The Vilani first arrived approximately 7,500 years ago and called the sector Ukan. They left their mark in many ways, none more obvious than the many Vilani-named star systems. During the Interstellar Wars, the Terrans invaded and renamed many worlds, left some names intact and corrupted others with Galanglic influences. To some extent, the names of the Core's worlds tell the tale. The Terrans burst into the First Imperium in leaps and bounds, annexing and conquering high-

value worlds and leaving lesser worlds in their wake. Many diamonds in the rough were overlooked during the invasion, which explains why many rich worlds still retain Vilani names and cultural heritage. After thousands of years of intermixing and the intercession of the Long Night, the Core is neither Vilani nor Solomani but somewhere in between.

The sector is a dynamic and ever-changing realm, and the structure of the Imperium does not lend itself to stasis. Individual worlds are free to determine their own destinies. There is a great deal of conflict and strife in the Core, just as there is anywhere else in the Imperium. Amidst all the wealth, gleaming palaces and gargantuan starships there is poverty, conflict, avarice, violence and every other human foible on display. This makes for a patchwork of freewheeling anarchies, authoritarian regimes, would-be utopias, struggling colonies, balkanised jigsaw puzzles and just about every other type of society that one can imagine. There is a greater concentration of high-tech and high-population worlds than on the frontiers. High-population worlds tend to have complex governments and high Law Levels as well. Authoritarianism runs strong in the heart of the Imperium.

The Core presents unique and exciting challenges for a group of Travellers. As one approaches Capital, the trappings of empire become increasingly evident. The burden of serving and protecting the Imperial throne world creates political and military intrigue throughout most of the Core and Kaskii subsectors. Branches extend from Capital like the nervous system of some great organism, making neighbouring worlds an extension of its will. Nobles jockey for position in fiefs near the throne world. Because of their proximity to Capital and easy access to the Moot, the nobility here wield an outsized influence.

Portions of two defeated empires – the Interstellar Confederacy and the Chanestin Kingdom – and other worlds retain some semblance of independence and a distinct cultural flavour but most have been fully integrated into the Imperium. This does not mean that the sector is devoid of conflict. New squabbles have taken the place of the old, most centred on territorial disputes between various political rivals, noble houses, megacorporations and trade guilds. The Emperor and peerage watch brewing disputes carefully. The ties that bind the Imperium can be tenuous.

The Core is well defended by its numbered and sector fleets, which are the most powerful in all of the Imperium. The Core Sector Fleet is headquartered at Depot with a goodly portion of its fleet elements based at Capital. The Imperial Interstellar Scout Service has its bureaucratic headquarters at Reference, where it also berths multiple scout cruisers. Reference is also well-defended by the Imperial Navy due to its strategic importance.

APGE

The Apge subsector is dominated by the Apge system, which contains over 80 percent of the subsector's inhabitants. Apge is the capital and is situated along a ring of star systems that are fittingly called the Apge Cluster, which is a tributary of a longer jump-1 main that extends into neighbouring Sanches, dipping into the Mekee and Perite subsectors as well.

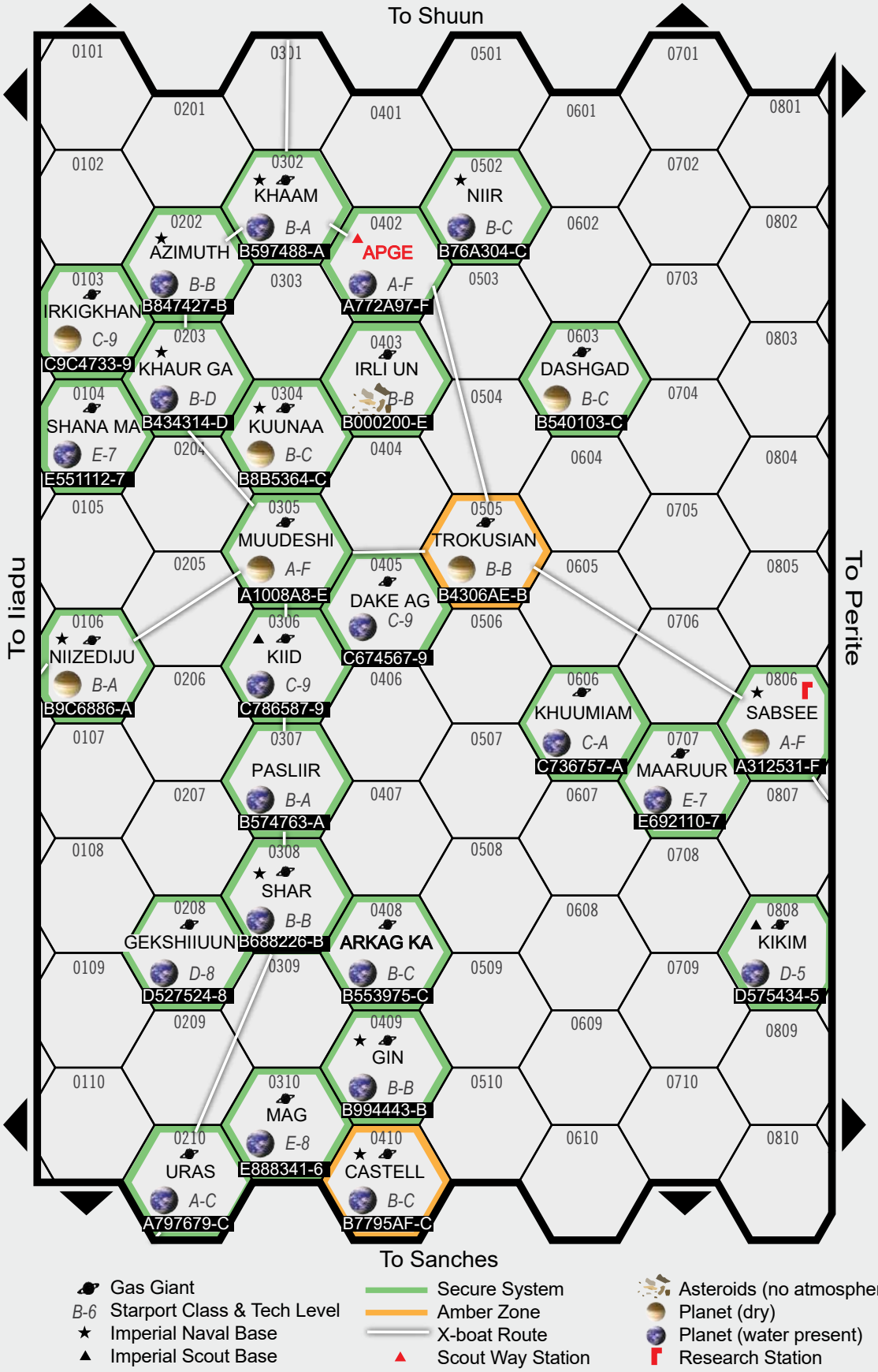
Duchess Azabaka Ashushashmi of Apge enjoys her role as custodian of a Core subsector but is very sensitive about the status of her world and its importance to the sector. The worlds in the rimward half of Apge are economically dominated by the Iiradu system in the neighbouring Dagudashaag sector. Restrained and conservative Apge has a difficult time wooing some of its more impressionable citizens away from Iiradu. The Apgeans are staunch traditionalists who favour a Vilani-style caste society in which everyone knows their place. Conversely, there is a great deal of economic mobility on Iiradu, both up and down the scale. The fact is most Iiraduans do not get rich. Wealth gravitates to a very select few but the stories of immigrants who go there and acquire immeasurable wealth are seductive. Duchess Ashushashmi does what she can to offer an alternative life path in which tradition, stability and service have greater value than obtaining riches. She puts immense pressure on the Apge Bureau of Life, Environment and Resources (ABLER) to 'get out and spread the word' about how wonderful the Apge Cluster is and how it is absolutely brimming with economic potential. Despite their catchy acronym, ABLER is in fact a traditionalist-style Vilani bureau, the members of whom would just as soon focus their efforts on the difficult job of managing a challenging planet without the interference of a busybody duchess. However, the duchess is quite persistent and does manage to persuade members of ABLER to take on public-relations missions from time-to-time. The Travellers might encounter these exhausted and unenthusiastic bureaucrats during their visits to the subsector.

The work done at Research Station Beta and the Naval Science Division Regional Headquarters on Sabsee are presented as examples of what can be achieved when Imperial citizens put their personal ambitions aside and dedicate themselves to the greater good. Scientists there are hard at work developing high-tech weaponry systems that are used to defend the Imperium. They are on the verge of a significant breakthrough in the field of fusion weapons technology and are about to introduce the FGMP-16, the smaller, lighter and deadlier successor of the FGMP-15.

Technological innovation has always been part of the lifeblood of Apge. At the dawn of the Third Imperium, Cleon Zhunastu's patented Fusion Plus technology was first employed in the Azimuth system, where it was successfully used to provide power for a light carrier and squadron of gunships deployed to combat pirates in the subsector. Azimuth is little more than a naval outpost in modern times but its highport is decorated with several mixed-media murals and interactive displays that reprise the battle to the tune of overly dramatic and slightly too loud original compositions from the Apge Symphony Orchestra.

Apge is defended by the 26th Fleet, with squadrons more or less evenly distributed among its worlds. A larger contingent is present at Sabsee to ensure the safety and security of its research facilities.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Apge	0402	W	A772A97-F	Hi In		
Arkag Ka	0408		B553975-C	Hi Ht Po		G
Azimuth	0202	N	B847427-B	Ni		
Castell	0410	N	B7795AF-C	Ht Ni	A	G
Dake Ag	0405		C674567-9	Ag Ni		G
Dashgad	0603		B540103-C	De Ht Lo Po		G
Gekshiiuun	0208		D527524-8	Ni		G
Gin	0409	N	B994443-B	Ni		G
Irkigkhan	0103		C9C4733-9	Fl		G
Irli Un	0403		B000200-E	As Ht Lo Va		G
Khaam	0302	N	B597488-A	Ni		G
Khaur Ga	0203	N	B434314-D	Ht Lo		
Khuumiam	0606		C736757-A			G
Kiid	0306	S	C786587-9	Ag Ga Ni		G
Kikim	0808	S	D575434-5	Lt Ni		G
Kuunaa	0304	N	B8B5364-C	Fl Ht Ga Lo		G
Maaruur	0707		E692110-7	Lo		G
Mag	0310		E888341-6	Lo		G
Muudeshi	0305		A1008A8-E	Ht Na Va		G
Niir	0502	N	B76A304-C	Ht Lo Wa		
Niizediju	0106	N	B9C6886-A	Fl		G
Pasliir	0307		B574763-A	Ag		
Sabsee	0806	N	A312531-F	Ht Ic Ni		
Shana Ma	0104		E551112-7	Lo Po		G
Shar	0308	N	B688226-B	Lo		G
Trokusian	0505		B4306AE-B	De Na Ni Po	A	G
Uras	0210		A797679-C	Ag Ht Ni		G


To Shuun
To Iiadu
To Perite
To Sanches
0101
0201
0301
0401
0501
0601
0701
0801
0102
0202
0302
KHAAM
B-A
0402
APGE
0502
NIIR
B-C
B76A304-C
0602
0702
0802
AZIMUTH
B597488-A
B-B
B847427-B
A-F
A772A97-F
0303
0503
0703
0103
IRKIGKHAN
C-9
C9C4733-9
0203
KHAUR GA
B-D
B434314-D
0403
IRLI UN
B-B
B000200-E
0603
DASHGAD
B-C
B540103-C
0803
0104
SHANA MA
E-7
E551112-7
0304
KUUNAA
B-C
B8B5364-C
0504
0704
0204
0404
0604
0804
0105
0305
MUUDESHI
A-F
A1008A8-E
0505
TROKUSIAN
B-B
B4306AE-B
0705
0205
0405
DAKE AG
C-9
C674567-9
0605
0805
0106
NIIZEDIJU
B-A
B9C6886-A
0306
KIID
C-9
C786587-9
0506
0706
0206
0406
0606
KHUUMIAM
C-A
C736757-A
0806
SABSEE
A-F
A312531-F
0107
0307
PASLIIR
B-A
B574763-A
0507
0707
MAARUUR
E-7
E692110-7
0207
0407
0607
0807
0108
0308
SHAR
B-B
B688226-B
0508
0708
0208
GEKSHIIUUN
D-8
D527524-8
0408
ARKAG KA
B-C
B553975-C
0608
0808
KIKIM
D-5
D575434-5
0109
0309
0509
0709
0209
0409
GIN
B-B
B994443-B
0609
0809
0110
0310
MAG
E-8
E888341-6
0510
0710
0210
URAS
A-C
A797679-C
0410
CASTELL
B-C
B7795AF-C
0610
0810
Gas Giant
B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
Imperial Naval Base
Imperial Scout Base
Secure System
Amber Zone
X-boat Route
Scout Way Station
Asteroids (no atmosphere/water)
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)
Research Station

APGE

At one time an important world of the First Imperium, Apge has experienced a tumultuous history. The fall of the Ziru Sirka caused a radical shift in the importance of various star systems. Apge weathered the storm by becoming an important stopover on the long route between Vland and Hub, the capital of the Rule of Man. During the Long Night, Apge reverted to its Vilani roots, declined to a lower Tech Level and adopted a more conservative culture.

A resurrected Vilani nobility returned to the practice of appointing the third-born child of the family as heir. This practice propagated to other tiers of society and resulted in a massive population boom. Under normal circumstances, this hallowed Vilani practice would precipitate the migration of first- and second-born offspring to other worlds, thereby serving as an engine for colonisation. However, during the Long Night, migration was not an option. The population of Apge flowered without access to enough resources to easily provide for everyone. The management of food production and processing became of utmost importance on this marginally habitable world. Apge is tidally locked with Aseladar, its red dwarf star, and only its twilight zone has a mild climate with its bright and dark sides less so. Nevertheless, billions of people were forced to live in all regions of the world as well as numerous orbital and Lagrange point artificial habitats. Apgeans have also settled the majority of the system's other worlds and even today a large belter community mines the planetoids of the Pukushkilaam Belt in the outer system, despite the fact that it has been largely tapped out from thousands of years of exploitation.

While Apge has once again arisen as a powerful interstellar high-technology society, it retains a disciplined and reserved culture. The advent of the Third Imperium resurrected Apge's importance and its Vilani-style bureaucracy reinvented itself as a key link between Vland and Core. While members of Apge's ruling class have accepted their roles as Imperial citizens, the world has maintained a distinctively Vilani flavour. Galanglic is universally spoken but Vilani is the language of choice when not engaging with offworlders.

CASTELL

Over 90 percent of the surface of Castell is covered by water. While its land masses are unremarkable and have only a few small settlements, its ocean floors are rich in valuable minerals and metals. For most of the world's history, the majority of the population has lived in undersea arcologies. After a large seismic disturbance in 758, the Myteria-Seru arcology flooded and crumbled, tragically killing all 1.5 million inhabitants. To prevent a recurrence, the government established draconian laws governing all aspects of life in the world's remaining undersea cities. Despite the overly rigorous laws, the world's leader retains the confidence of his people. Citizens are educated from birth to respect the artificial environments in which they live and to believe that strict control of every action is necessary to ensure their safety.

The overzealous safety regulations have had an adverse effect on population growth. Among Castell's many laws are some that strictly control reproduction. The goal was to maintain replacement level population numbers but instead they have seen a steady decline. A full 350 years after the accident, the population is approximately 10 percent of what it was. To prevent complete social and economic collapse, the government has begun to allow offworlders to immigrate to Castell, allowing them to build floating cities, mining submarines and establish a nomadic ocean-going culture. The one requirement is that they participate in Castell's essential mining industries. The newcomers are virtually unrestricted by Castell's high Law Level. The state-run media restricts the natives' knowledge of how the immigrants live but some of them have found out nonetheless. The government is now engaged in a two-prong attack to set things right: on the one hand, they have redoubled their efforts to restrict the flow of information to the natives, and on the other they have begun to impose laws on the immigrants that they are loath to accept.

MAARUUR

Maaruur is the largest moon and solitary habitable planetary body of the gas giant, Kaasgada. The moon once hosted a burgeoning industrial society of billions of sophonts, which had achieved TL9 by the mid-300s. In addition to its human inhabitants, the world was also host to a native intelligent species known as Shingans. The Shingans were hairy bipeds whose development was limited by their lack of dextrous appendages. Their graspers enabled them to create a primitive agrarian society but the inability to craft more advanced tools kept them at approximately TL1 when they were first contacted by the Vilani thousands of years ago.

Under the Ziru Sirka and Rule of Man, the Shingans formed a societal underclass, taking service and labour roles. They were an intelligent species and many resented the millennia of oppression at the hands of humans, whom they believed to be their equals. Progressive human scientists developed prostheses for the Shingans, which enabled them to do the same things as their human counterparts but the technology was outlawed during the Long Night, returning the Shingans to their traditional roles.

Despite their inability to craft items of technology beyond stone tools, the Shingans were a philosophical people who were very much in touch with their environment. In addition to consuming the plant and animal life of their world they cultivated a vast array of narcotics, which were consumed for medical, religious and recreational use. The effects of most of these substances were next to nil for humans but produced almost mystical effects in the Shingans. Scientific studies of these biochemical interactions were left largely incomplete but early research discovered that the Shingan biome extended heavily into their brain tissue. The various microbes living on the Shingan brainstem served as a biological middleman, catalysing much stronger effects than would otherwise occur.

During the early Third Imperium era, Shingan shamans discovered a rare natural substance that enabled them to commandeer the conscious mind of humans and other animals. Frequent usage of the substance eventually subsumed it into the cerebral biome of the Shingans to the point where they no longer had to imbibe it to achieve these effects. The shamans led the Shingan people in a revolt against the humans. It was theorised, but never proven, that the substance was only able to interact with the cerebral biomes of psionically talented Shingans. In 350, the Imperial Navy interdicted the world before the Shingans were able to export the mind-controlling agents. Five dreadnoughts were brought into the system, three of which orbitally assaulted population centres with particle weapons and mass drivers while the other two bombarded the planet with planetoids gathered from the system's belts. Maaruur was cleansed of virtually all life forms within weeks. The 1,300 people at the highport – 400 of whom were Shingans – were quarantined and examined for the presence of the dangerous narcotic. Those who were free of its effects were relocated to the Khaam system where the navy quarantined them for an additional period of time before releasing them into the general public. The 400 or so surviving Shingans were not a large enough sample to revive the race and are believed to have gone extinct within a few generations.

Today, Maaruur remains a desolate world, its atmosphere still tainted by the dust, gases and other effluvia of the bombardment. Although inspectors declared the world safe for recolonisation two centuries ago, few people accepted the offer, even with generous subsidies.

So thorough was the bombardment that no cities were left standing. Maaruur was basically reduced to a primordial state. Nevertheless, salvage teams still come to Maaruur to pick over its bones from time-to-time. There is a great deal of superstition among spacers about Maaruur and what happens to those who disturb this worldwide graveyard.

NIIZEDIJU

The acidic air and high atmospheric pressure on Niizediju have made settlement of the planet challenging at best. For this reason, much of the population lives in orbital cities, Lagrange-point habitats and on the moons of its mainworld and gas giants. Those who eke out a living on Niizediju itself do so with the use of materials technology imported from Dana and Muudeshi. Niizediju is rich in petrochemicals and valuable rare-earth minerals but conditions on the planet make resource extraction difficult. Most of its cities are subterranean and linked by an underground rapid transit network. Habitats and factories on the surface are built with corrosion-resistant polymers and crystaliron alloys.

Niizediju has a highly transient population. Fully 40 percent of its people are offworlders who have come to make a living and then move on to greener pastures. For most, the supposed road to success has been paved with broken dreams. A large percentage of its population are living on the edge of financial

disaster and reliant on the charity of its more well-to-do inhabitants, many of whom are loath to provide assistance. This has resulted in a financially stratified society with a great deal of tension between the social classes and the paralysed ruling council has done little to alleviate such problems.

The Viscount of Niizediju has been petitioned to come up with a long-term solution. Unfortunately, the good viscount spends most of his time at the Moot Spire on Capital, where he basks in the glory of being an Imperial noble. While he does spend about a quarter of each year on Niizediju, he has shown little interest in involving himself in local affairs. His offhand response has been to provide subsidies for traders and liners to take its financially challenged citizens and deposit them elsewhere. This has made him extremely unpopular with his neighbours and the factory chiefs of Niizedjiu itself who need a work force and do not want to send the wrong message to potential newcomers.

SABSEE

In addition to the FGMP-16, which is described in the *Central Supply Catalogue*, Research Station Beta on Sabsee has created a number of other interesting armour and weapons technologies.

Ion Rifle

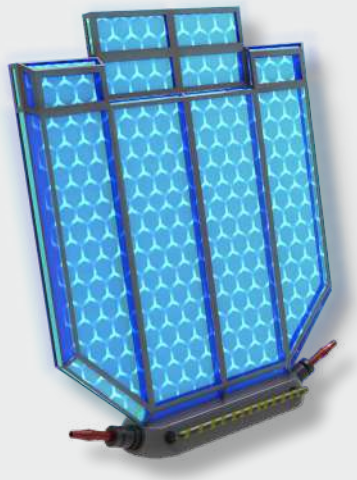
At higher Tech Levels, ion technology has been miniaturised to the level that it can be used for personal weapons. At TL14, a hit from an ion rifle can disrupt electronic equipment on vehicles or powered armour for 1D rounds. Powered armour with Protection +20 or higher is immune and the weapon does not affect vehicle with Armour 4+. At TL15, the ion rifle is considerably more expensive but can penetrate personal armour with any Protection and can momentarily disrupt vehicles with Armour 8 or less.

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Power Pack Cost	Traits
Ion Rifle	14	600	Special	6	Cr16000	100	Cr5000	Zero-G
Ion Rifle	15	800	Special	5	Cr24000	100	Cr8000	Zero-G

Ion Shield

As with any weapons system, the stakes are ratcheted ever upward by new technological innovations. Powered armour may be equipped with an Ion Shield that negates the effects of personal ion weapons.

Modification	TL	Slots	Cost
Ion Shield	14	1	Cr5000



Personal Energy Shield

There are times when armour is needed but the appearance of having armour is not. Nobles visiting hostile territory, military officers inspecting undisciplined militia, diplomats making first contact and others may require defensive armour without looking as if they are geared up for combat. The personal energy shield creates an invisible gravitic field around the wearer, which repels ballistic and all energy attacks except lasers. The shield is powered by a small, unobtrusive battery that may be worn at the belt or beneath the clothing in order to conceal its presence. A standard battery provides six hours of protection.

A skilled wearer can overload the battery to get more Protection by making a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check to recalibrate the device. Success with an Effect of 0-3 provides Protection +18 but reduces the battery life by one half. Effect of 4–5 provides Protection +24 with one half the battery life. An Effect of 6+ provides Protection +24 with no reduction in battery life. The Traveller must reattempt the calibration with each recharge of the battery.

Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Personal Energy Shield	+12	15	—	1*	Cr320000	None

* The weight of the personal energy shield is that of the battery.

Stun Rifle

A non-lethal weapon, designed to inflict a massive shock to the target or targets, incapacitating them. The stun rifle employs similar technology to that of the stunner (see page 116 of the *Central Supply Catalogue*), inflicting more damage and providing a blast option. When set to blast, the stun rifle receives the Blast trait. Blast shots inflict reduced damage of 3D and consume two charges from the magazine.

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Power Pack Cost	Traits
Stun Rifle	13	20	4D/3D*	5	Cr3000	200	Cr500	Blast 3*, Stun, Zero-G

* Weapon does 4D of damage when set to single target and 3D when set to blast.

Perite

The motto of the Perite subsector might very well be 'Look to Spinward'. Regardless of its proximity to Capital, Perite has a distinctly Vilani flavour. After the fall of the Rule of Man three millennia ago, many of the worlds in Perite shook off the yolk of Terran dominance, in some cases violently, and returned to their roots. During the Long Night, populations on many worlds collapsed; the societies that remained returned to the Vilani language, traditions and rituals that had guided their lives for thousands of years before the disastrous Interstellar Wars and subsequent Rule of Man. After contact with the Sylean Federation in approximately -450 and the re-emergence of interstellar trade, Perite became more of a hybrid culture but even today visitors can see the tension that exists between cosmopolitan Imperial society and traditional Vilani boroughs.

The Karnika system is called the 'Gateway to Core' and serves as an important link on the route between Vland and Capital. Duke Dagalu Kiinlarsuush Rikhummi makes his home there but spends a great deal of time travelling the worlds of the subsector with his charismatic wife, Asasshaa, a woman of noble lineage who traces her heritage back thousands of years to the dynasties that governed the region during the era of the Ziru Sirka. The duke himself is of mixed origin but has adopted a Vilani surname in order to endear himself with the Vilani-majority population. Only his nearest friends and relations know him by his birth name, Evander Konig.

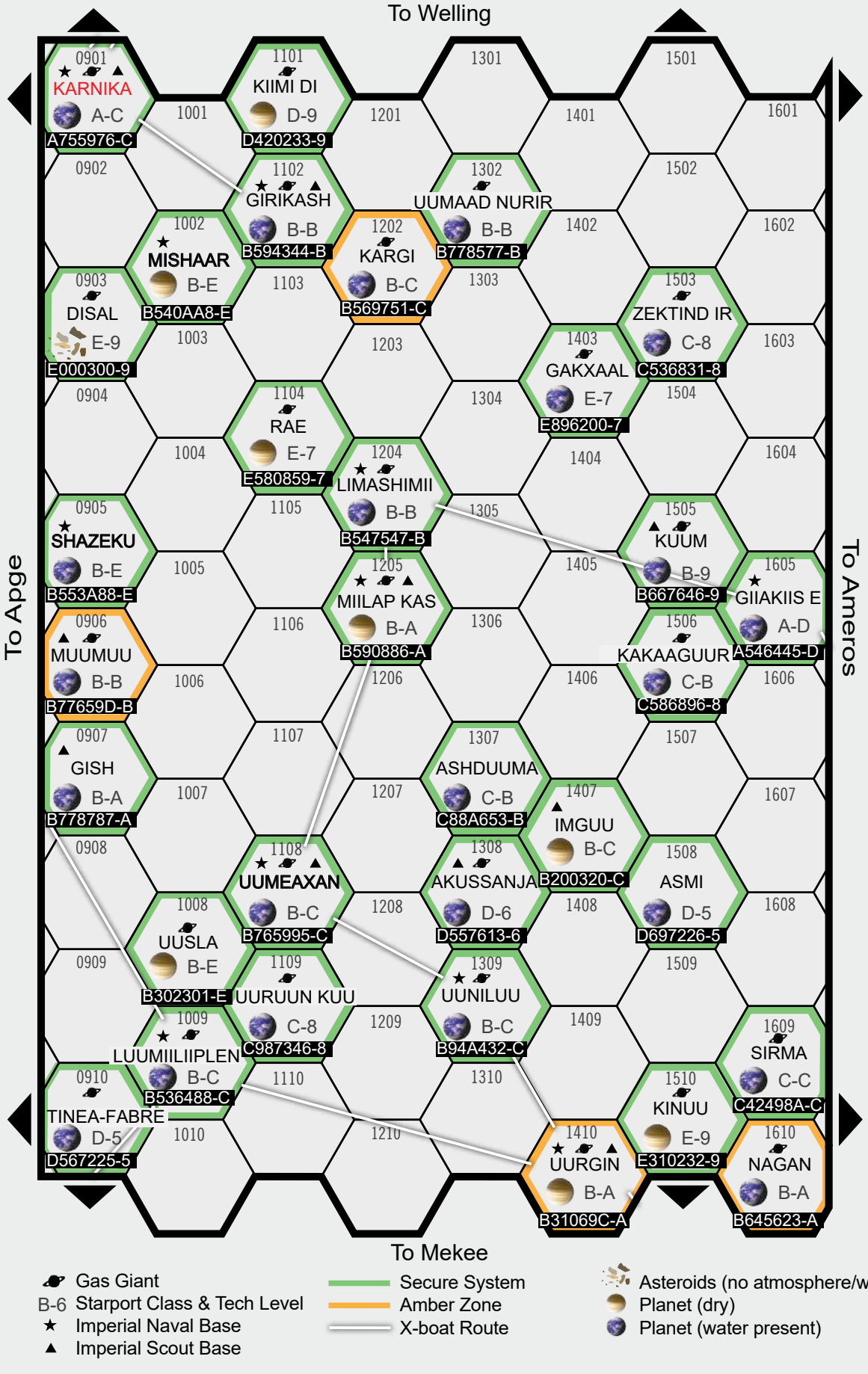
Unlike some members of the nobility who prefer to lie low and manage their holdings, the duke and duchess are celebrities in Perite, which has a free and progressive culture. Law Levels are mostly low and government interference is minimal on most worlds. While Perite celebrates its kinship with nearby Vland, the economy of Perite is much more heavily linked with that of the Lishun sector.

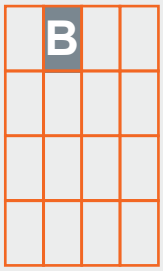
A popular entertainment trend in the subsector is a rash of 'Shugilii shows', holovideo series that celebrate the Vilani tradition of food processing. The hosts of the shows travel the subsector, showing people how to process flora and fauna from its worlds. The most popular of them is 'Shugilii Shimiirkhuki', in which the host hunts a multitude of animal species and shows how to field process the animals, using each and every bit for consumption and other uses. The hosts of the most popular shows are huge celebrities in Perite and Apge but less well known elsewhere.

Perite's stellar density is spotty and includes several inconvenient gaps in its astrography. Tramp traders working their way into the lucrative Core market typically operate far traders or subsidised merchants equipped with collapsible fuel tanks for crossing the empty space between its star clusters.

Perite is defended by the 51st Fleet, based in Karnika, Mishaar, Shazeku and Uumeaxan with squadrons posted at numerous systems. All of the ships of the fleet bear Vilani names, which makes them easy to pick out during joint exercises elsewhere in the Core. The flagship of the fleet is a heavy cruiser that is called *Khidenuum iru Argukege*, the 'Duty of the Wise'.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Akussanja	1308	S	D557613-6	Ag Ni		G
Ashduuma	1307		C88A653-B	Ni Ri Wa		
Asmi	1508		D697226-5	Lo Lt		
Disal	0903		E000300-9	As Lo Va		G
Gakxaal	1403		E896200-7	Lo		G
Giiakiis E	1605	N	A546445-D	Ht Ni		
Girikash	1102	N S	B594344-B	Lo		G
Gish	0907	S	B778787-A	Ag		
Imguu	1407	S	B200320-C	Ht Lo Va		
Kakaaguur	1506		C586896-8	Ri		G
Kargi	1202		B569751-C	Ht Ri	A	G
Karnika	0901	N S	A755976-C	Ga Ht Hi		G
Kiimi Di	1101		D420233-9	De Lo Po		G
Kinuu	1510		E310232-9	Lo		G
Kuum	1505	S	B667646-9	Ag Ga Ni Ri		G
Limashimii	1204	N	B547547-B	Ag Ni		G
Luumiiliiplen	1009	N	B536488-C	Ht Ni		G
Miilap Kas	1205	N S	B590886-A	De		G
Mishaar	1002	N	B540AA8-E	De Hi Ht In Po		
Muumuu	0906	S	B77659D-B	Ag Ni	A	G
Nagan	1610		B645623-A	Ag Ni	A	G
Rae	1104		E580859-7	De Ri		G
Shazeku	0905	N	B553A88-E	Hi Ht Po		
Sirma	1609		C42498A-C	Hi Ht In		G
Tinea-Fabre	0910		D567225-5	Lo Lt		G
Uumaad Nurir	1302		B778577-B	Ag Ni		G
Uumeaxan	1108	N S	B765995-C	Hi Ht		G
Uuniluu	1309	N	B94A432-C	Ht Ni Wa		G
Uurgin	1410	N S	B31069C-A	Ht Na Ni	A	G
Uuruun Kuu	1109		C987346-8	Ga Lo		G
Uusla	1008		B302301-E	Ht Ic Lo Va		G
Zektind Ir	1503		C536831-8			G





CORE

PERITE SUBSECTOR

AKUSSANJA

Akussanja hosts a variety of unusual life forms as a result of its unusual relationship with its red dwarf binary pair, Blaukasa and Iona. Like most worlds that orbit red dwarf stars, Akussanja is tidally locked, so one side of the planet always faces Blaukasa while the other faces away. Iona has an eccentric orbit, approximately 45° off the plane of the ecliptic. Approximately every 2.5 standard years, Iona comes close enough to Akussanja to have a significant effect on the planet. When distant, Akussanja's hydrosphere is frozen, creating ice caps nearly the world over. The planet's abundant sea life is mostly dormant during this period but when Iona is close, its frozen oceans partially melt and the seas come to life. Akussanjan fish hibernate during the cold periods and become active only when they have significant heat from both stars. In addition, Iona casts its dim light on what is otherwise Akussanja's dark side.

The Scout Service maintains a base in the system to observe the unusual Akussanjan life forms. IISS scientists believe that studies of the biochemistry of these creatures might have applications in the cryogenics field. After failed attempts to involve the Core sector's Research Stations Beta and Gamma,

the IISS extended offers to the corporate community and – much to their chagrin – drew the interest of SuSAG, which established a permanent presence on the planet. As it turns out, the IISS and SuSAG do not get along well and have recently stopped sharing their findings with each other. Most of the population on Akussanja are members of the Scout Service, employees of SuSAG, or workers from various companies present to support the two organisations. As the rift between the IISS and SuSAG has gotten worse, the service companies have found themselves caught in the middle. Accusations have been made on both sides that the service companies include spies for one side or the other. Unfortunately, the situation has continued to get worse and shows no signs of abating.

GAKXAAL

A popular destination for Travellers who enjoy roughing it in the great outdoors, Gakxaal is stitched with an unusual number of tall mountain ranges. The world has been largely overlooked because of its high degree of tectonic activity and pervasive species of fungoids, viruses and bacterial masses. Evolution on the planet never managed to produce complex animal species but microbial life runs rampant in its oceans, seas and low-lying valleys. However, little of its native life may be found at an elevation of more than 1,000 metres. The planet has a dense, high-pressure atmosphere with significant carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide and hydrogen sulphide taints spewed from its dozens of active volcanos.

Gakxaal is off the beaten path and poses a challenging environment for long-term settlement. The starport is rudimentary, little more than terraces and pueblo-like structures carved out of limestone. The landing pads are too small and unstable to dock a starship but many can support small craft and gravitic vehicles. A tourist service in the planet's northern hemisphere offers transportation via airship between some of its more popular mountain ranges. Trained guides and mountaineers are available to show intrepid Travellers the many wonders of the planet. One of its more popular attractions is the Glass Valley, a canyon system with billions of loose olivine and pyroxene stones that have been cleansed of dust and regolith by various bacterial species. The canyons glisten with the green and purple hues of the stones and cast a hypnotic prismatic effect when Gakxaal's star shines directly upon them.

SHAZEKU

During the Long Night, Shazeku was governed by a pantheist religion known as the Bamshimbakkada. The priesthood remained in power for thousands of years until it was toppled by a revolution a few decades after being integrated into the Imperium. The remains of the Bamshimbakkada are everywhere. Immense temples, state buildings, monuments and other public works have been preserved and converted for use by the modern, high-tech society. Others have been made into museums and historical sites for tourists.

There were 14 deities in the Bamshimbakkada pantheon, each of whom were represented by a planet or star in the Shazeku system. Shazeku's two red dwarf stars, Aadii and Kuusi, are approximately one light year apart and each orbited by six planets. The Bamshimbakkadans believed that the worlds of Aadii, including Shazeku itself, represented various aspects of goodness and virtue. Conversely, the worlds of Kuusi represented vice, the underworld and other evils. While the populations of the worlds orbiting Kuusi all died out during the Long Night, they have since been repopulated. To this day the Shazekuans are superstitious about Kuusi and generally avoid engaging in trade, diplomacy or other exchanges with its worlds in spite of the fact that they debunked the Bamshimbakkadan religion over 1,000 years ago.

The Imperial Navy Base on Shazeku is an important one. The world is host to several small craft construction yards that manufacture fighters, armed pinnaces and modular cutters for the navy. Shazeku's solitary moon is a test site for new prototypes where some of the sector's top test pilots put these spacecraft through their paces before they are sold to the Imperial Navy and various planetary navies. Naval architects have recently been seen at the 'Black Cube', a highly secure research installation where the navy is said to be working with sector-wide corporation Hodan-Barley on a new breed of starfighter.

THE ANNILILIK RUN

The legendary 'silk road' between Vland and Capital is known as the Annililik Run. The route between the two worlds was of great importance at the dawn of the Third Imperium, linking the two capitals during an era when the intervening space was strewn with pirates and the remains of civilisations blighted by the Long Night. Contact between Sylea and Vland was established centuries before the advent of the Third Imperium but few ship captains had the nerve to travel between the two worlds. Traders could make a decent living plying routes in the relative safety of their own pocket empires and only those with a lust for fame and adventure attempted the Annililik Run. Those who completed it with their hides intact became celebrities, many of whom leveraged their fame to acquire greater social standing and prosperity.

The route was perilous for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the distance across reaches of space that had not been travelled much for centuries. Right out of the gates from Vland, you have a number of star systems with no gas giants, which makes wilderness refuelling a challenge. While hydrogen may also be obtained by extracting it from liquid water on planets with a hydrosphere, there are often regulations that prevent this practice on inhabited worlds. There are several minor stellar chasms along the way as well and chokepoints at the Vliishuug (now called Inader) and Karnika systems. Savvy traders took bypasses, of course, but every deviation from the main route meant more jumps and thus more exposure to potential pirate attacks, equipment failure or other perils. Many traders became lost along the route, some never to be seen or heard from again. Lost traders were often said to have vanished into the 'Annililik Pyramid', a mysterious phenomenon that mercilessly gobbled up wayward starships.

The Annililik Run became somewhat safer as the Long Night came to an end and Capital benefited immensely from increased traffic along the route. Linking old Vland with newly minted Capital lent the fledgling Third Imperium an air of validity at a time when its prospects for success were very much in doubt. It also enabled Capital to seed Vland with Fusion Plus technology, one of the cornerstones of Cleon Zhunastu's outreach programme to the worlds around Sylea. As the route became safer, larger and more capable merchant convoys began to make the Run. This resulted not only in the enrichment of many merchant lines but also in a cultural exchange between empires old and new, laying the groundwork for the eventual incorporation of Vland into the Third Imperium.

In modern times, a race between Vland and Capital is held once every four gurkula (a Vilani 'year', each of which is approximately 478.7 standard days) to commemorate the Annililik Run. The two worlds alternate as starting and finish lines for the race; after an Annililik Run is completed in one direction, it reverses course the next time the event is held. If ever there were a fitting interstellar analogue to the ancient Terran fable of the 'Tortoise and the Hare', this race is it. Ships are limited to jump-2 and up to 600 tons. The race has dual objectives, the first of which is to make the Run in an allotted period of time. The distance between Vland and Capital is 60 parsecs and a jump-2 ship can make it between the two systems in about 31 jumps if the most direct route is taken. Contestants are expected to make the run in 60–75 weeks. Late arrivals are disqualified. The second objective is to make money. The Annililik Run is, after all, a commemoration of a famous trade route. Besides that, there are very few contestants who have the Credits to travel so far without making money to cover expenses along the way. Contestants may take on freight, mail, speculative cargo and passengers. The most reputable ships are often fully booked with mid and high passages before they even begin the Run.

The Annililik Run is more about efficiency than speed. The rules allow for contestants to purchase fuel at registered starports or extract it from gas giants, comets, icy planetoids and other natural resources. Each jump must be to an inhabited star system, so leapfrogging between worlds by jumping into empty space and using fuel from a collapsible fuel tank is not allowed. Fuel costs are recorded and subtracted from one's totals at the end of the race. Some star systems along the route are backwaters that see little traffic when the race is not being run. Not surprisingly, many of them take advantage of the situation and have been known to price gouge for fuel, maintenance and other services. To combat this, some contestants scout the route ahead of time and seed it with fuel caches to reduce costs and speed up their transit times. This practice is strictly forbidden by the rules but has proven to be difficult to enforce.

One would think that the modern Third Imperium would not be a place for superstition and myth but tales of the Annililik Pyramid persist. Very few ships are lost during the event but those that do disappear are commonly believed to have been consumed by the Pyramid. There

are rational explanations for most disappearances: deviating too far off the main route and failing to return, quitting the race, engine failure and piracy to name just a few. While the latter is extremely rare in the civilised heart of the Imperium, the high amount of traffic passing along the Run makes it too tempting to pass up for those of a predatory nature. Most of the culprits are merely opportunistic part-time villains who look for the weak among the herd and strike where they can, victimising unarmed ships that stray off the beaten path.

Despite the competitive nature of the event, many ship crews engage in a level of camaraderie along the way. Contestants meet each other at starport bars to tell tall tales, gossip about fellow competitors and trade rumours. However, not all exchanges are friendly. The crews of competing ships often try to misdirect their opponents with red herrings to throw them off the main route. False stories are planted about big scores to be had, low-priced fuel, minable comets that turn out not to be there, essentially anything that can slow down or befuddle other racers. Wise and experienced ship captains learn to separate truth from fiction. Competing crews often develop enmity with one another and friendly competition sometimes morphs into heated rivalries. Many a starport brawl has broken out between rivals along the route. In extreme cases, this escalates into a bout of ship combat but firing upon one another is a severe breach of the rules and grounds for immediate disqualification, so it rarely happens.

As the event has gained in popularity, corporate sponsorships have become a big boon to Travellers who make the Annililik Run. Corporations tend to sponsor only proven winners, contestants who have made the Run in the past and shown well. Contestants sponsored by the top corporations typically sweep the main categories of the event. Their ships are highly maintained, possess the best technology available and have skilled, well-trained crews. The event garners so much media attention that participating corporations gain a great deal of publicity simply from having their logos adorn the hulls of sponsored ships. While collusion between contestants is prohibited, those who are sponsored by the same corporation get away with a few subtle advantages. Most of them run analytics software that tracks their opponents and shares the data among other ships that have the same sponsor. Independent tramp traders have none of these advantages but some still manage to show well by employing a combination of skill, cleverness and more than a little chutzpah.
It should be noted that not all corporate sponsors are on the up and up. Some are fraudulent or shady front organisations that take Credits from would-be contestants and others are failing companies that fail to provide the promised support. Travellers must take caution when establishing a relationship with a potential sponsor. There are private investigation firms on both Vland and Capital whose specialty is investigating sponsors but their services do not come cheap.

There are many distractions for the contestants, especially the most famous ones and those who are leading the pack. Media outlets flock to their ships to get the latest news and many worlds roll out the proverbial red carpet as the ships make their way along the Run. Worlds like Karnika – generally considered the gateway to the Core for race participants – create a festive environment including armed escorts and a 'parade path' from the 100-diameter limit to the highport or downport. With all the pomp and circumstance, it is easy for a contestant to get side-tracked; only those with the utmost degree of professionalism know best how to manage the media, politicians, fans and all of the other distractions with grace and aplomb. Corporate-sponsored ships are expected to engage with the public to some degree. Petulant captains and crews can lose their sponsorships if they are overly curt or rude.

Reaching the finish line is just the beginning. Until the 75th week has passed, the locals at Capital or Vland watch and wait as more and more contestants roll in. A leader board forms, ranking the contestants with an algorithm based on the speed and efficiency with which they made the Run along with a measure of their profits. There are many categories to win but the top award goes to the ship that achieved the best balance of speed and net income. The Grand Champion is given an enormous cash prize and gains fame and fortune to last a lifetime.

For some, making the Annililik Run is a once-in-a-lifetime adventure, a break from the norm and an adventure they will never forget. After a Run is completed, most contestants return to their lives as crewmembers on liners, freighters and tramp traders. For others, the Annililik Run is a way of life. Many of them establish a migratory lifestyle around the event. For example, a contestant might make the Run to Capital and then spend the intervening years before the next race plying the trade routes of the Core, only to come back to Capital to prepare for the next race. When they arrive in Vland, more than four garkula later, they ply the routes of Vland for a while and so forth. The Annililik Run has a culture and tradition all its own that seems to have captured the imagination of Imperial citizens. Its popularity seems to grow with each passing year.

CORPORATE-SPONSORED FAR TRADER

CLASS: EMPRESS PORFIRIA

Corporate sponsors for ships making the Annililik Run want results. The *Empress Porfiria*-class far trader has been optimised for efficient operation during the event. Its two Gs of thrust enable it to get from the 100-diameter limit to starports or gas giants considerably faster than most ships. This design sacrifices the low berths and air/raft that usually come standard in order to increase available cargo space. One of its two turrets is equipped with an intense-focus laser drill for faster acquisition of ice chunks from comets and planetoids, enabling the ship to perform wilderness refuelling even when a gas giant is not present. Variants of the class sometimes feature a high or luxury stateroom. Fame and fortune have their privileges after all.

TL14		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	200 tons, Streamlined	—	12
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (energy efficient x2)	4	10
J-Drive	Jump 2 (decreased fuel x3)	15	33.75
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 90	6	6
Fuel Tanks	J-2, 4 weeks of operation	35	—
Bridge		10	1
Computer	Computer/10	—	0.16
Sensors	Civilian	1	3
Weapons	Double Turret (accurate, high yield pulse lasers) x2	1	3.5
	Single Turret (intense focus, easy to repair laser drill)	1	0.425
Systems	Fuel Processor (40 tons/day)	2	0.1
	Fuel Scoops	—	—
	Cargo Scoop	2	0.5
	Loading Belt (TL12)	1	0.01
	Cargo Airlocks x2	6	0.6
Staterooms	Standard x10	40	5
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Library	—	—
Common Areas		10	1
Cargo		64	—

Crew

Pilot, Astrogator, Engineer, Gunners x2, Steward

Hull: 80

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr6437/month

PURCHASE COST

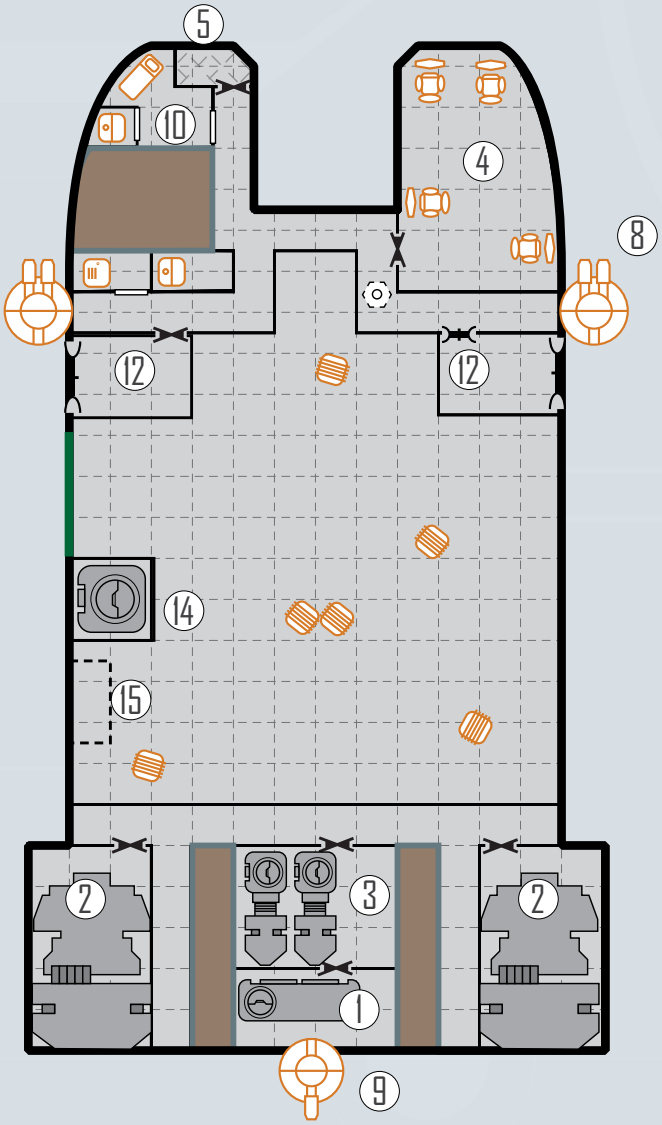
MCr77.245

Power Requirements

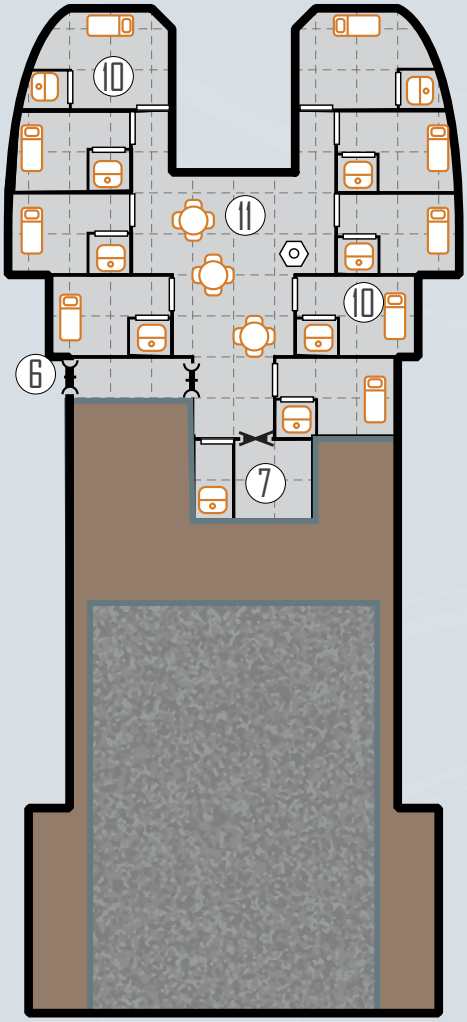
Basic Ship Systems	40
Manoeuvre Drive	20
Jump Drive	40
Sensors	1
Weapons	14
Fuel Processor	2

CORPORATE-SPONSORED FAR TRADER

CORPORATE-SPONSORED FAR TRADER



DECK 2



DECK 1

1. M–Drive
2. J–Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Bridge
5. Sensors
6. Airlock
7. Fuel Processor
8. Double Turret
9. Single Turret
10. Staterooms
11. Common Area
12. Cargo Airlocks
13. Loading Belt
14. Cargo Scoop

1 SQUARE = 0.5 TONS

AMEROS

Ameros has two distinctive features: the rimward tail of the extensive Lishun Main, which wends its way through Ameros in serpentine fashion and proceeds into the Shinkan subsector; and the Ameros Rift, a broad stellar gap that most starships cannot cross with a single jump.

The coreward portion of the subsector is dominated by the capital at Khizuun. The Khizuuni see themselves as the rock upon which the Lishun sector breaks and Core begins. To be a world of the Core is to be an extension of Capital as far as the Khizuuni are concerned and they believe that Lishunians must be 'cleansed' before entering the hallowed worlds of the Core. Entering at Khizuun – which many Travellers do because of its rich markets and convenient location – foreign starships are reminded that they are no longer in 'the provinces' but have entered the proverbial gatehouse of the Emperor. Khizuun's intrusive planetary navy, whose uniform is intentionally similar to that of the Imperial Navy, attempts to inspect every single ship that enters the realm, despite the impossibility of actually doing so. The Khizuuni are effectively trying to serve as a protective membrane through which visitors might transform themselves into respectable citizens of the Imperium. For their part, Lishunian traders and other visitors see the Khizuuni as a nuisance but not one that is entirely unfamiliar; Lishun is no stranger to authoritarian governments and most just see it as a cost of doing business.

The Imperial Navy's 69th Fleet is headquartered at Khizuun with squadrons in several other systems and two BatRons semi-permanently stationed at Nimluin. Likewise, the Scout Service maintains a large presence on Khizuun, where they supervise the construction of x-boats, tenders and survey craft for the way station on Gemi.

The intensity of Khizuuni culture has had an effect on many of its neighbours, mostly by making them a little neurotic. There are several worlds with Amber Zone designations in Ameros, many of which suffer from varying degrees of political instability. Like a nosy and vigilant watchdog, Khizuun recklessly intrudes upon their affairs with intelligence agents emplaced throughout the subsector. These agents subvert governments, foster insurgencies and assassinate political opponents in an effort to bring them in line with Khizunni dictates. The High Captain of the Khizuuni Supreme Council has made veiled threats that he might authorise the invasion of some of the subsector's more troublesome worlds, all for the cause of establishing a safer, more prosperous Imperial order, of course.

While Ameros is an old and long-civilised subsector, it has somehow managed to retain several worlds with virtually unspoiled wildernesses. The frozen water world of Erkiim, the bountiful twilight band of Luuni Miu and the recently opened reserve world of Lagaashin are a few examples. These worlds are popular destinations for tourists provided that they can ignore the invasive presence of the subsector capital.

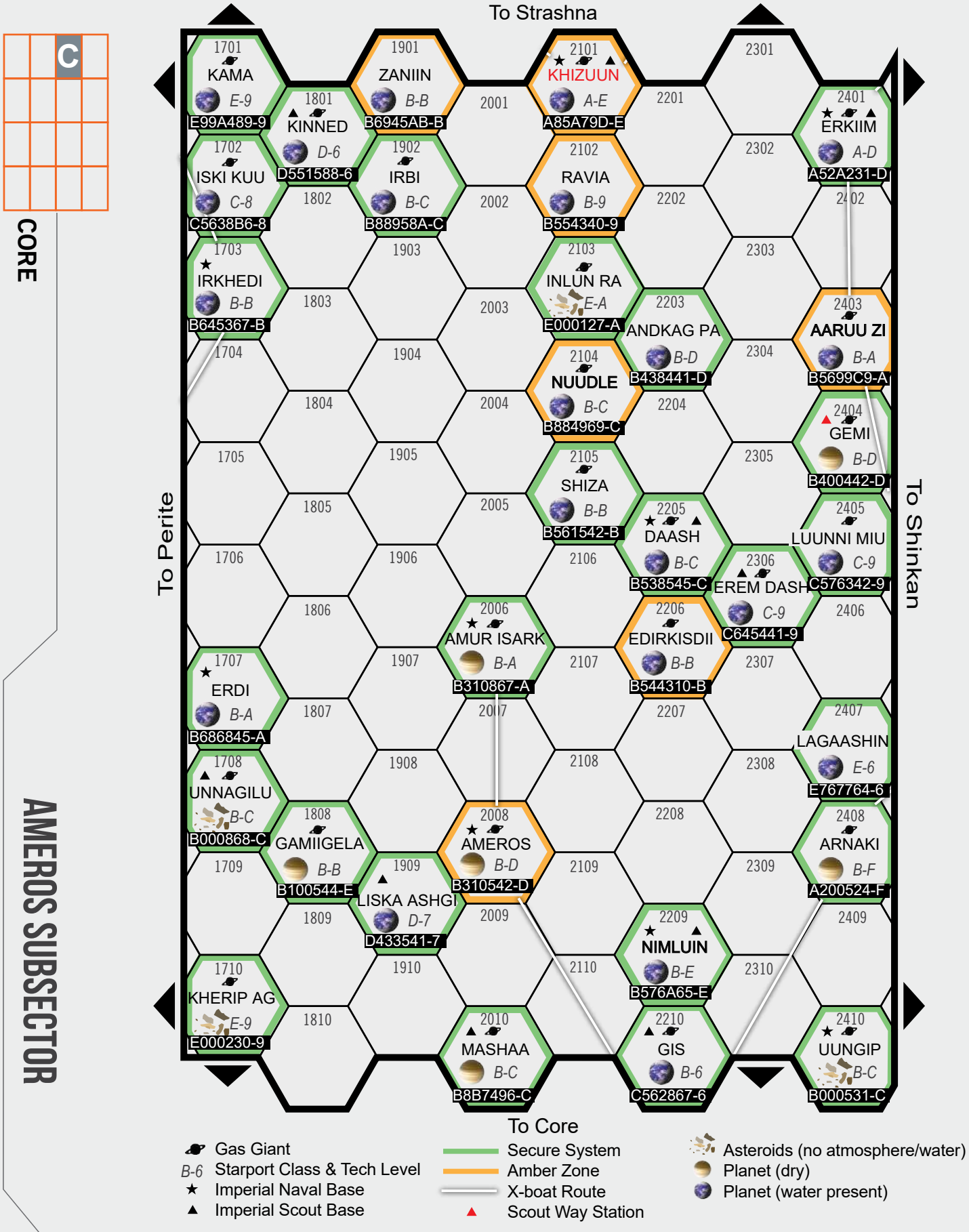
AMEROS

Over 50 years ago, megacorporation Hortalez et Cie, LIC underwrote an ambitious terraforming project on Ameros, whose goal it was to give the planet a thin atmosphere and 10-percent hydrosphere within the century. Purportedly they would transform the world without dropping any comets and planetoids from orbit, normally the linchpin of any terraforming project. Metamorph, the fledgling firm in charge of the project, have employed an experimental combination of biochemical, geological and gravitic techniques to get the job done, eschewing more traditional means but at far greater expense.

The results have not justified the hype thus far. With the project more than half complete, Ameros only has a trace atmosphere and negligible hydrosphere, all of which is currently locked up in equatorial ice caps. Hortalez et Cie is upset about the lack of progress but Metamorph scientists have assured them that results are coming. Metamorph contends that the first several decades of their revolutionary approach are preparatory and that the majority of the results will not appear until the very end of the project.

A competing firm has recently offered to come in and finish the job, proposing to scour the system's Oort cloud for cometary bodies and other material with which to bombard Ameros, thereby thickening its atmosphere and providing water. Using less fancy technology, they believe that they can free up water in subterranean

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Aaruu Zi	2403		B5699C9-A	Hi	A	G
Ameros	2008	N	B310542-D	Ht Ni	A	G
Amur Isark	2006	N	B310867-A	Na		G
Andkag Pa	2203		B438441-D	Ht Ni		
Arnaki	2408		A200524-F	Ht Ni Va		G
Daash	2205	N S	B538545-C	Ht Ni		G
Edirkisdii	2206		B544310-B	Lo	A	G
Erdi	1707	N	B686845-A	Ga Ri		
Erem Dash	2306	S	C645441-9	Ni		G
Erkiim	2401	N S	A52A231-D	Ht Lo		G
Gamiigela	1808		B100544-E	Ht Ni Va		G
Gemi	2404	W	B400442-D	Ht Ni Va		G
Gis	2210	S	C562867-6	Ri		G
Iiska Ashgi	1909	S	D433541-7	Ni Po		
Inlun Ra	2103		E000127-A	As Lo Va		G
Irbi	1902		B88958A-C	Ht Ni		G
Irkhedi	1703	N	B645367-B	Lo		
Iski Kuu	1702		C5638B6-8	Ri		G
Kama	1701		E99A489-9	Ni Wa		G
Kherip Ag	1710		E000230-9	As Lo Va		G
Khizuun	2101	N S	A85A79D-E	Ht Wa	A	G
Kinned	1801	S	D551588-6	Ni Po		G
Lagaashin	2407		E767764-6	Ag Ga Ht Ri		
Luunni Miu	2405		C576342-9	Lo		G
Mashaa	2010	S	B8B7496-C	Fl Ht Ni		G
Nimluin	2209	N S	B576A65-E	Hi Ht In		
Nuudle	2104		B884969-C	Hi Ht	A	G
Ravla	2102		B554340-9	Lo	A	
Shiza	2105		B561542-B	Ni		G
Unnagilu	1708	S	B000868-C	As Ht Na Va		G
Uungip	2410	N	B000531-C	As Ht Ni Va		G
Zaniin	1901		B6945AB-B	Ag Ni	A	


CORE
C
AMEROS SUBSECTOR
To Strashna
To Perite
To Shinkan
To Core
1701 KAMA E-9 E99A489-9
1801 KINNED D-6 D551588-6
1901 ZANIIN B-B B6945AB-B
2101 KHIZUUN A-E A85A79D-E
2301
2401 ERKIIM A-D A52A231-D
1702 ISKI KUU C-8 C5638B6-8
1902 IRBI B-C B88958A-C
2102 RAVIA B-9 B554340-9
2302
2402
1703 IRKHEDI B-B B645367-B
2103 INLUN RA E-A E000127-A
2203 ANDKAG PA B-D B438441-D
2403 AARUU ZI B-A B5699C9-A
2104 NUUDLE B-C B884969-C
2404 GEMI B-D B400442-D
2105 SHIZA B-B B561542-B
2205 DAASH B-C B538545-C
2405 LUUNNI MIU C-9 C576342-9
2306 EREM DASH C-9 C645441-9
2006 AMUR ISARK B-A B310867-A
2206 EDIRKISDII B-B B544310-B
2406
1707 ERDI B-A B686845-A
2407 LAGAASHIN E-6 E767764-6
1708 UNNAGILU B-C B000868-C
1808 GAMIIGELA B-B B100544-E
2008 AMEROS B-D B310542-D
2408 ARNAKI B-F A200524-F
1909 LISKA ASHGI D-7 D433541-7
2209 NIMLUIN B-E B576A65-E
2409
1710 KHERIP AG E-9 E000230-9
2010 MASHAA B-C B8B7496-C
2210 GIS B-6 C562867-6
2410 UUNGIP B-C B000531-C
Gas Giant
B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
Imperial Naval Base
Imperial Scout Base
Secure System
Amber Zone
X-boat Route
Scout Way Station
Asteroids (no atmosphere/water)
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)

aquifers and even add spin to Ameros, which would otherwise be tidally locked to the system's circumbinary pair. Hortalez is considering their pitch but Metamorph has expressed concerns that mixing the two approaches could have unexpected and possibly disastrous results.

LAGAASHIN

Lagaashin had been a reserve world dating back to the late stages of the First Imperium when it was a playground for high-ranking members of the Vilani nobility. Its stable primary star, habitable mainworld and well-developed biosphere made it a prime candidate for settlement. However, colonial expansion sometimes advances in mysterious ways and the world was bypassed numerous times in spite of its suitability. The Vilani had intended to develop Lagaashin for agricultural purposes once population levels in nearby systems reached a certain point but the Interstellar Wars and eventual fall of the Ziru Sirka prevented this from happening. During the Rule of Man, the conquering Solomani were more eager to exploit established agricultural worlds than to do the hard work of developing new ones and Lagaashin was passed by again. As the Third Imperium came about, one of its key tenets was respecting Vilani culture and traditions. While the Vilani had probably long forgotten that Lagaashin was ever a reserve world at this point, the Syleans' historical records indicated otherwise and so, once again, Lagaashin was left undisturbed.

In the ensuing centuries, the notion of Lagaashin being a reserve world faded and local powers began to plan for its eventual use. Ninua, the capital of neighbouring the Shinkan subsector, wanted Lagaashin to become a penal colony whose prisoners would be forced to work the land. Rapidly growing Nimluin hoped to send colonists there to relieve its overpopulation problems. Nuudle and Aaruu Zi planned to offer access to Lagaashin as an alternative for people who sought a simple, pastoral lifestyle.

It was Ninua who struck first, sending political prisoners, suspected dissidents and other perceived troublemakers to the world in 577, allegedly to provide labour for a number of agricultural collectives. A few decades later, the military junta on Nimluin followed suit, sending millions of political prisoners to Lagaashin where they were given basic supplies for survival and left largely to their own devices. Over time, the administration of the world became a nuisance for both Ninua and Nimluin and the descendants of the first Lagaashinians were granted limited self-rule. In the late 800s, the Lagaashinians created an array of interlocked councils to govern their world, a civil-service bureaucracy whose responsibility it was to carefully manage the resources and environment that had been gifted to them. Above all, they sought to achieve balance, using technology and planning to create a sustainable society.

As Lagaashin's government matured and its people became aware of the universe around them, they saw the opportunity to make their world an experiment in which resources were not ravenously gobbled up but instead carefully managed and cultivated. The Tech Level on Lagaashin is somewhat difficult to measure. While its citizens do not rely on technology to the extent that people from other worlds do, they do use high-tech building materials, agricultural techniques and equipment with other technologies, which do not adversely affect the unique society they are trying to build. High technology is applied in an unobtrusive manner and low-tech solutions are used wherever practical, resulting in an overall lower Tech Level rating.

While Lagaashin was hardly a utopia, it had successfully created a sustainable and peaceful society. Alas, the Lagaashinians have fallen on troubled times. Ninua has once again asserted its authority over the planet, sending troops to the world under the pretence that they were present to 'keep the peace' despite there being little evidence of conflict. Ninua has also asserted that they require greater agricultural output from Lagaashin to address the needs of their growing population. Ninua is pushing Lagaashin to adopt a more aggressive development strategy and to expand their agricultural zones to include regions of the world that had been declared natural preserves. Ninua also wants Lagaashin to use lower-cost agricultural extraction technology that would threaten the delicate ecological balance that they have achieved. Many Lagaashinians are pushing back the only way that they can: by peacefully protesting Ninua's unbidden and jackbooted assault on their world. General strikes by agricultural workers, hunger strikes and large demonstrations have become the norm in Lagaashin's cities and towns. Authoritarian Ninua is intolerant of all forms of civil disobedience and has begun to oppress the Lagaashinians with the same methods used on their own world.

Of all the species native to Lagaashin, Kovil's ox – or simply, the kovil – has been the easiest to domesticate. This gentle, elephantine creature showed little fear of the early colonists and settled in among them. The kovil is not really an ox at all but its size and demeanour earned it the name. Kovils were trained to pull ploughs and other heavy equipment on the agricultural combines until more

efficient technological means were imported. While the kovil does not object to being led or ridden, attempts to train it to charge or behave aggressively have failed miserably. The animal is able to manage its pain centres, so corporal punishment and training techniques are ineffective. If badly wounded, the animal will attempt to flee and might trample anyone caught in its path but it will not otherwise attempt to harm humans. Kovils are rarely used as beasts of burden anymore, but they are still frequently seen grazing the fields and meandering through villages looking for food.

UNNAGILU

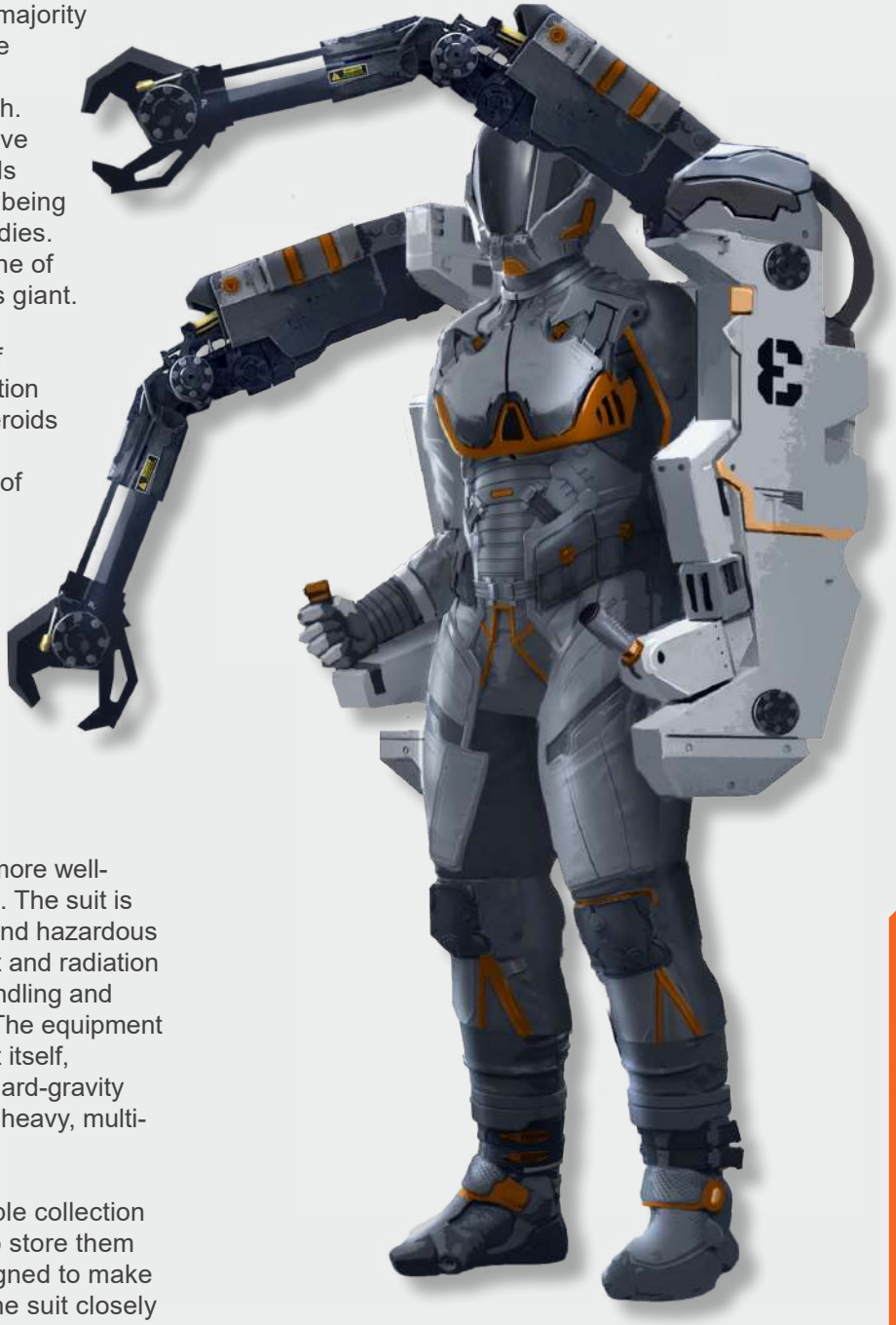
The Unnagilu belt was host to small outposts for most of its history until the late 650s when belters struck rich deposits of iridium, ruthenium and rhodium, causing a rush to the system. Since then, the belt has been heavily exploited but belters continue to actively search for lodes of the rare metals among its millions of asteroids. Sternmetal Horizons was the first megacorporation to purchase major claims in the belt and has the longest-running presence in the system. Upstart mining firm, Delgado Trading, LIC, came onto the scene in the mid-1050s. The two firms now battle it out for supremacy, snatching up claims as they arise and scouring the belt for new strikes with arrays of mining drones. Things got nasty when the two corporations started deploying weaponised drones to disable and often outright destroy each other's drones and other equipment. They kept their little war a secret until one of them inadvertently destroyed a seeker starship that was owned by an independent belter. Unnagilu's government got involved but its representative democracy had been corrupted by the influential megacorporations and was unable to resolve the dispute. The government was dissolved having lost the confidence of its people. The Imperial Navy threatened to intervene before things got out of hand so the two firms hired mercenary forces to secure their strikes and keep the peace. The mercenaries have been put into the unlikely role of de facto governors of the system and established military rule in the belt and on the system's other worlds and gas giant moons. Mercenary commanders working for both sides effectively collude with one another in order to maintain the status quo. While they are ill-suited to the tasks of government, a tense peace remains in place in the system. The Imperium is ready to intervene and has threatened to apply an Amber Zone designation to Unnagilu, which would likely be disastrous for all involved.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Kovil's Ox	85	8m
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 1, Survival 1	
Attacks	Trample (4D)	
Traits	Armour (+6), Tough, Large (+2)	
Behaviour	Herbivore, Grazer	

It is difficult to make a living as an independent belter in this environment but that does not deter many from trying. Independents – or 'indies' as they are known – make up 8–10 percent of the belter population in Unnagilu. The indies chafe at the arbitrary interference of mercenary security forces but there is little they can do about it. Many are taking their seekers elsewhere to avoid getting caught in the crossfire but dreams of hitting a big beltstrike have kept the indie community alive in Unnagilu's belt.

The scout base on Unnagilu includes one of the service's primary zero-G training facilities. The scouts have sectioned off a region of the belt for the purpose of training its members in the finer points of vacc suit and zero-G operations. While its official designation is IISS Base 096G-1117, the scouts affectionately refer to it as 'Camp Space Jockey'. The majority of scouts present for training are from the Exploration and Survey branches with a minority from the Communications branch. The asteroids inhabited by the scouts have been tapped of their most valuable metals and minerals, which prevents them from being contested by the megacorporations or indies. The scouts also have a base on Ordri, one of the moons of the system's innermost gas giant.

Despite Unnagilu's problems, centuries of settlement have created a thriving civilisation in the belt. Hundreds of hollowed out asteroids are now home to populations of belters, corporate employees and the employees of the companies and small businesses that are required to provide services for the them all. Most of these artificial habitats are run quite well by local councils who are in the process of building a new system government and drafting a constitution for Unnagilu that excludes the bickering megacorporations from having an influence.



IISS EVA Suit

The Scout Service EVA suit is a hardier, more well-equipped version of its standard vacc suit. The suit is designed to handle multiple challenging and hazardous working environments with improved heat and radiation shielding, internal grav-assist, precise handling and extended life support for up to 48 hours. The equipment consists of two components: the vacc suit itself, which may be worn in non-vacuum, standard-gravity environments; and the EVA rig which is a heavy, multi-purpose apparatus that the suit clips into.

The rig includes a set of waldos for sample collection and several sealed storage containers to store them in. Its advanced life-support gear is designed to make operating in the suit very comfortable. The suit closely monitors the occupant's vital signs and has internal injectors to provide first aid, anti-rad medicine and stimulants for long EVAs.

Item	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
IISS EVA Suit	+12	12	150	14	Cr150000	Vacc Suit 1

SHINKAN

The flow of interstellar trade and travel does not bestow equal benefits to all the worlds of the Core. Shinkan is a case in point, an important subsector but it has always been a bit of a backwater. Sitting at the nexus of four major Imperial sectors, it has the potential to become a shining pearl of the realm but things simply have not played out that way thus far.

Shinkan was the site of many Vilani 'reserve worlds', planets that – thousands of years ago – were marked for future development. Few of them were even given a proper name other than an alphanumeric designation. For this reason, many worlds in the subsector do not bear Vilani names but instead those of the Terrans, who swept through the subsector as a conquering force during the later stages of the Interstellar Wars. Besides naming them, the Terrans and subsequent Rule of Man did little with these untapped treasures and they were eventually inherited by the Third Imperium who finally began to develop them.

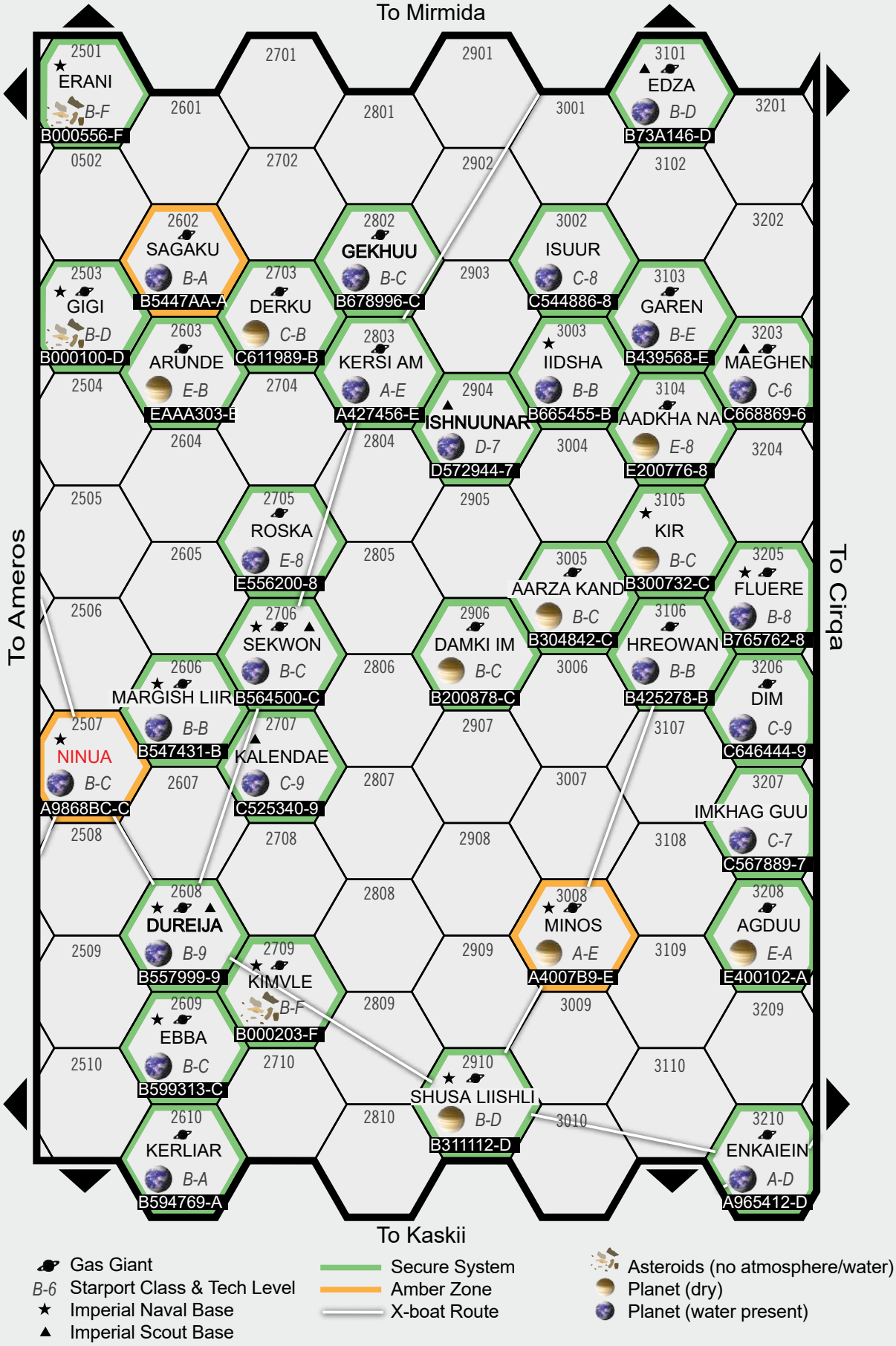
The seat of government for Shinkan is at Ninua, which shows little interest in managing subsector affairs, making its worlds a loose confederation at best. The systems of Shinkan are rarely cooperative, often contentious and in a few cases downright hostile to one another. The aloof Ninuans are constantly struggling with their own internal political problems and generally regarded as a nuisance by their neighbours. Ninua is jokingly referred to as the *anshikaam naimiiu saarpuhii*, loosely translated as 'the world which looks away'. Indeed it does but Ninua just might find that while its attentions are diverted inward, the remainder of its worlds have moved on without it.

The flow of trade from neighbouring Fornast and Antares passes into the Core through Shinkan, which has created a caste of nouveau riche merchants on many of its worlds. An abundance of recently constructed high-tech starports along the Shinkan Main are signs of its burgeoning economy. Ishnuunar, despite appearances, channels more wealth into the Core than any other world in the subsector. Ishnuunar's kleptocratic government, collapsing infrastructure and disastrous Tech Level seem to be signs of a world in freefall but in fact opportunities abound there. The powerful and exorbitantly wealth Ishnuunari merchant guilds run the system like a syndicate of crime families. The guilds have their hands in just about every business venture on the planet and their tendrils have begun to spread to other star systems. The fastidious landed gentry of Gekhuu and Derku have done what they can to stave off guild infiltration but have not proven to be up to the task thus far. The three worlds – which have become known as 'the Triad` – have begun to fight proxy wars on the hapless smaller worlds of the subsector. Most believe that it is only a matter of time before these conflicts spread to the Triad worlds themselves.

The sector-wide Achenaar Antilles line, which dominates shipping in just about every other subsector of the Core, has found it difficult to penetrate the byzantine markets of Shinkan. Their efforts to establish a regional headquarters at Dureija have met with one disaster after another. The regional director of the corporation has accused the Triad of sabotage. The powerful trade line has been lobbying the Imperial bureaucracy for assistance but so far they have received little help. It seems that the Imperium does not want to rock the boat in Shinkan, whether or not the subsector's successes have been achieved by questionable means.

The bulk of the Imperial Navy's 76th fleet is headquartered at Sekwon with squadrons stationed throughout the subsector. The Naval Base on Iidsha includes a training facility and operational centre for Imperial Naval Intelligence. While the INI are allegedly there to monitor incoming traffic from Antares and Fornast, they are presumably also keeping a watchful eye on the Triad to make sure that their problems with one another do not boil over into something more serious.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Aadkha Na	3104		E200776-8	Na Va		G
Aarza Kand	3005		B304842-C	Ht Ic Va		G
Agduu	3208		E400102-A	Lo Va		G
Arunde	2603		EAAA303-B	Fl Lo		G
Damki Im	2906		B200878-C	Ht Na Va		G
Derku	2703		C611989-B	Hi Ic In Na		G
Dim	3206		C646444-9	Ni		G
Dureija	2608	N S	B557999-9	Hi		G
Ebba	2609	N	B599313-C	Ht Lo		G
Edza	3101	S	B73A146-D	Ht Lo Wa		G
Enkaiein	3210		A965412-D	Ht Ni		G
Erani	2501	N	B000556-F	As Ht Ni Va		
Fluere	3205	N	B765762-8	Ag Ga Ri		G
Garen	3103		B439568-E	Ht Ni		G
Gekhuu	2802		B678996-C	Hi Ht In		G
Gigi	2503	N	B000100-D	As Ht Lo Va		G
Hreowan	3106		B425278-B	Lo		G
Iidsha	3003	N	B665455-B	Ga Ni		
Imkhag Guu	3207		C567889-7	Ri		
Ishnuunar	2904	S	D572944-7	Hi In		
Isuur	3002		C544886-8			
Kalendae	2707	S	C525340-9	Lo		
Kerliar	2610		B594769-A	Ag		G
Kersi Am	2803		A427456-E	Ht Ni		G
Kimvle	2709	N	B000203-F	As Ht Lo Va		G
Kir	3105	N	B300732-C	Ht Na Va		
Maeghen	3203	S	C668869-6	Ri		G
Margish Liir	2606	N	B547431-B	Ni		G
Minos	3008	N	A4007B9-E	Ht Na Va	A	G
Ninua	2507	N	A9868BC-C	Ht Ri	A	
Roska	2705		E556200-8	Lo		G
Sagaku	2602		B5447AA-A	Ag	A	G
Sekwon	2706	NS	B564500-C	Ag Ht Ni		G
Shusa Liishli	2910	N	B311112-D	Ht Ic Lo		G



SHINKAN SUBSECTOR

AARZA KAND

For all that Aarza Kand lacks in comfortable, habitable worlds, it is rich in resources. The system was never much more than an outpost for the Vilani and the Solomani only began to scratch the surface of its potential before the Long Night interrupted. Aarza Kand was overlooked by just about everyone until the mid-400s when belters and wildcatters began to exploit its planetoid belts and gas giants for resources. The system became a proverbial boom town and attracted millions of immigrants who came to make their fortunes. Among those who came were Irilitok Vargr from the Antares sector.

In Antares and other Imperial sectors, the Irilitok have become the go-to minority to do the dirty work that no one else wants to do: running remote space stations, building infrastructure on hostile-environment worlds, exterminating alien pests, providing security for minor merchant convoys and just about every other hazardous, life-threatening job that needs to be done. If there is money to be made and no one else wants to do it, the Irilitok will avail themselves for the job. They are heedless of danger and serve in roles that most right-minded Imperial citizens refuse to take. However, there is a dark side to the Irilitok: the Ekilati Onati, a star-spanning organised crime organisation that occupies the lower rung of their society.

In most sectors, the Ekilati Onati are an afterthought, low-level thugs who extort protection money from the bottom-feeding Irilitok castes but in Shinkan – where they are referred to simply as 'the Antareans' – they are a force to be reckoned with in the criminal underworld. The Triad War between the guilds of Ishnuunar and syndicates of Derku and Gekhuu has left a power vacuum on many worlds that the Antareans have been quick to fill.

The Antareans operate primarily out of Aarza Kand itself but they also have gangs in both belts and just about every spaceport in the outer system. The Vargr are a minority race and try to keep a low profile as best they can but when crossed, the Antareans respond with violent retribution. They often employ humans as enforcers and assassins to prevent law-enforcement officers from easily implicating them. Their signature act of retribution is to perform a 'defanging' before offing someone. The bodies of their victims are found with their incisors and often their claws – or fingernails if they are human – removed. Mid-level gangsters sometimes wear collected teeth on a necklace. Traditionally this form of violence was only enacted upon other Vargr but the Ekilati Onati have begun to inflict it upon humans as well.

DIM

The primary star and mainworld share the same name in this system: the star due to its weak luminosity and the planet for the prospects of its citizens. Dim is a cold, mostly barren world, far outside the habitable zone of the system, its star a distant speck that provides little in the way of light or heat. The system's largest gas giant, Oaf, is at the tipping point of becoming a brown dwarf and approaches the size of Dim, the star. Oaf and Dim orbit a close common barycentre, the two cosmic bodies engaged in a tightly spinning dance with one another. The other planets of the system, including Dim itself, are circumbinary and therefore orbit both the star and gas giant. The planet Dim is not tidally locked with its primary star, which is unusual in a red dwarf system. At some point in its distant past, Dim may have been struck by a planet nearly its own size, giving it a rotational period of about 12 standard days. The collision theory also explains the presence of a reasonably thick atmosphere and large amount of water, most of which is frozen to a depth of several hundred metres.

Life on Dim is, well… not bright but the world does have some intrinsic value. It is located on the extensive Lishun Main, which wends its way from Ameros into Shinkan and continues two subsectors into Fornast sector before it finally terminates. Traffic on the main is high and Dim's modest starport is designed to facilitate trade as best it can. The central pod of its highport is a busy thoroughfare where freight and speculative cargo flows from ship-to-ship. Low-tech robots, large and small, scurry about transporting cargo modules, product samples, mail pods and other materials between wheeling and dealing merchants. Visitors learn to watch their step lest they be run down in its narrow streets.

Free-market shenanigans aside, Dim's top commodity is information. Dim is an entry point into the Core and as such serves as a launchpad into the markets of the sector. Some may dismiss borders as ultimately just imaginary lines but most tramp traders are quick to point out that there is something different about the Core's worlds. They have a unique culture and way of doing business. Newcomers to the sector or Travellers who have returned after being away in Fornast or Antares for a while come to Dim to get the lowdown on current events. The liquor may be cheap at Dim Highport but the talk is not. Its numerous taverns, speakeasies and dive bars are crowded with Travellers who trade information on any number of topics.

The surface of Dim is barely populated. The world's metal and mineral reserves are poor although there are a few small operations that scratch out a living mining copper, aluminium and tungsten. Its main industry is ice cracking: robotic extractors obtain the ice, crack it for hydrogen and ship it up to the highport where it is sold in its unrefined state. There is no downport on Dim, just a small spaceport that is fit only to dock small craft.

Dim Highport Cargo Robot

Dim cargo bots of various shapes and sizes are a common sight at the Highport. These robots may be rented by the hour and used to retrieve small lots of cargo from the central hub or other ships docked at the port. Most are designed to be remote controlled by individuals, but some have preset programming and a list of daily tasks which they doggedly perform with little regard for pedestrians on Highport thoroughfares. Travellers must take care to watch out for these lumbering drones as accidents occur from time-to-time.

Operating a Dim Highport cargo robot without trampling innocent bystanders: Difficult (10+) Electronics (remote ops) check (2D minutes, DEX).

Robot	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Dim Highport Cargo Robot	50	Walker	(Vehicle)	12	Cr430000
Skills	Athletics (endurance) 3, Athletics (strength) 4, Athletics (strength) 4, Profession (labourer) 2, Mechanic 1				
Attacks	Inadvertent Trample (3D)				
Manipulators	2x (STR 18, DEX 7)				
Endurance	864 (173) hours				
Traits	Armour (+4), ATV, Large (+2), Vehicle Speed: Very Slow (Slow), Hardened				
Programming	Advanced (INT 6)				
Options	Auditory Sensor, Drone Control Interface (advanced), Visual Spectrum Sensor, Voder Speaker, Wireless Data Link, Magnetic Grippers, Forklift (medium), Transceiver 50 km (improved), Vacuum Environment Protection, Cutting Torch (improved), Mechanical Toolkit (basic)				

MAEGHEN

After living under the rule of a feudal monarchy for much of its existence, Maeghen underwent a revolution a few centuries ago in which the people rose up and violently overthrew the ruling families. The successor government was ostensibly a representative democracy but was in fact controlled by a corrupt shadow government, some of whom were exiled members of the monarchy. This was toppled as well and the Maeghenians, despite repeated attempts, proved unable to build a lasting government. After several failed experiments with self-rule, the People's Army took control of the planet and established a modicum of stability. While military rule is considered to be an interim step towards the establishment of a viable civilian government, it seems to be working just fine on Maeghen and there are no plans to change the arrangement any time soon. There are still rumbles of another revolution brewing but none of them have achieved any level of legitimacy or momentum thus far.

Maeghen maintains an aloof presence among the worlds of the Shinkan Main, a throwback to the Long Night when fending for oneself was the way of things. Generally speaking, life is good on Maeghen. With its Earth-like atmosphere and nearly standard gravity, the Maeghenians are self-sufficient and most of its citizens pay little attention to the interstellar community around them. Its serviceable and utilitarian highport

welcomes visitors who are travelling along the Lishun Main but the downport scarcely rates a Class E facility. The scout base on the planet has its own Class B starport, complete with a service facility, small-craft manufacturing centre and refined fuel. The base is not accessible to the public but detached duty scouts may use it upon request.

The scouts' reason for being on Maeghen is to study its unusual native plant and animal life. Based on the fossil record, over 75 percent of the species on the planet have been present for over a billion years without a major extinction event, highly unusual in the galactic scheme of things. Most worlds have fairly regular cataclysms: ice ages, asteroid strikes, plagues and other catastrophes that wipe out existing life forms only to make way for a new wave after millions of years of evolution by the survivors. The results of IISS studies are inconclusive but they have noticed several curious gaps in the taxonomy of the planet, which might be a contributing factor.

The molecular structure of Maeghen's native plant life makes it indigestible for humans. Over thousands of years of habitation, the Vilani genetically altered select species to make them nutritious for humans. In addition, they manipulated the soil so it could grow crops of imported edible food. The methods they used to adapt the plants have been lost in antiquity but most of these crops continue to thrive today. There is some concern that a blight of sufficient size could cause widespread famine but the Maeghenians have been fortunate enough to avoid such a calamity so far.

MINOS

Minos was overlooked by the Vilani during the era of the Ziru Sirka due to its inconvenient location and lack of resources or life. It was eventually settled and developed by Solomani colonists after surveyors reported that there might be riches under the crusts of its airless rockballs. Lo and behold it was true; beneath the shallow crust of Minos, rich iridium and tungsten lodes were found as well as the elements to easily manufacture synthetic Zuchai crystals, all of which are key components in the construction of jump drives.

The initial plan was for a conglomerate of local companies to ship the materials offworld on mid- to long-range freighters, to be used in shipyards located elsewhere. Much to everyone's surprise, the megacorporation GSbAG orchestrated a hostile takeover of the publicly listed companies in the conglomerate and effectively commandeered the Minos system. Shares of the major players involved were held in three different offworld exchanges but GSbAG timed their purchases to be virtually simultaneous, therefore preventing any of them from communicating with one another and preventing the takeover. Minor holdings are still held by the locals and several other investors but GSbAG managed to acquire a commanding 53-percent share of the operation. The move was extremely unpopular with the locals even after GSbAG promised to employ them at its newly built shipyard. GSbAG made assurances that it had no designs on corporate control of the system, just its industries. However, the megacorporation seems to be quite cosy with Minos' civilian dictator who gives in to GSbAG's every demand. In spite of the apparent conflict of interest, Minos' shipyards are highly productive, producing starships for the Imperial Navy and several planetary navies. They also manufacture starships of civilian design but only at premium prices. GSbAG is known for high quality and its Minosian products do not disappoint.

While Minosian culture cannot be said to be distinctly Solomani, they do possess a certain smugness and entitlement that hails back to the age of the Terran takeover. Minos was a Quarantine World until late in the Sylean Pacification Campaign and surrendered to Imperial authority only after being threatened with orbital bombardment. Time and the hostile acquisition of their system's resources has not imbued them with any degree of humility whatsoever. By and large, Minosians see themselves as bold wildcatters, making their way on a frontier system when in fact, they are very much ingrained citizens of the Imperium. There is a navy base present to remind them that the Rule of Man fell long ago and that they are citizens of the Third Imperium, not the Second.

Rumour has it that Minos is what one might call a 'double Amber Zone'. While the Imperial Navy is allegedly present to ensure the loyalty of the Minosians and to guarantee safe transit across the Shinkan Gap, they seem to be preoccupied with something else entirely. Naval ships of unusual design have been seen jumping out of the system without reappearing at any of the worlds in the interstellar neighbourhood. It is believed that these ships are jumping into the empty space somewhere between Minos and Kalendae, for what reason no one knows. Spurious rumours abound that they are investigating an Ancients cache, a rogue planet, a wreck from the Interstellar Wars or another unusual object somewhere in the cold depths of space. Whatever it is, the navy has been tight-lipped about it.

Sanches

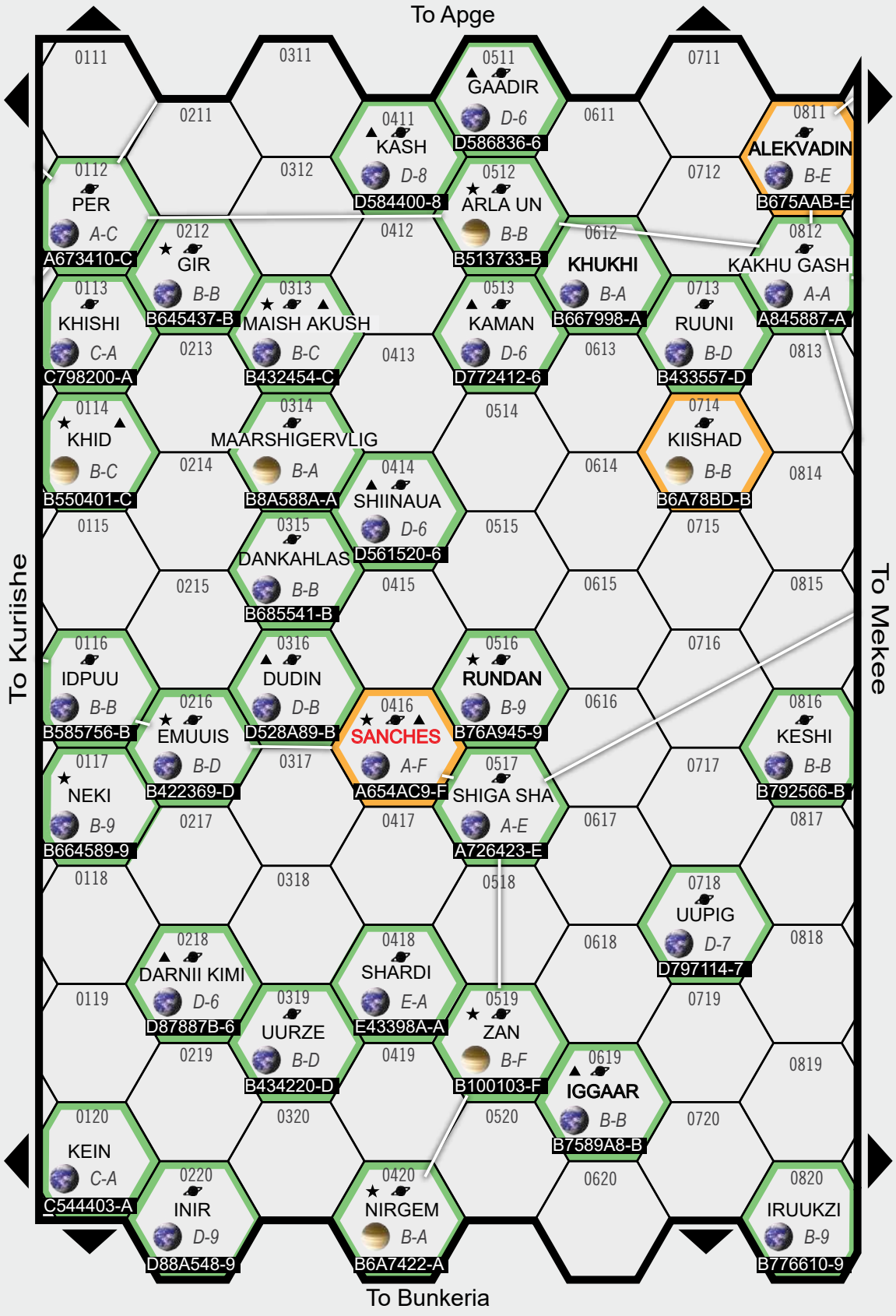
Heavily populated Sanches is considered by most to be the gateway to Dagudashaag but the Sanchesian Prime Worlds – the high-population cluster of worlds centred around the Sanches system itself – are primarily focused on serving the Core. Its two industrial worlds, Alekvadin and Dudin, manufacture many of the sector's consumer electronics and entertainment devices. Sanches brings in a great deal of wealth from the sales of its products to the other worlds of the Core and exports to other sectors. The business of the subsector is business. Its culture is highly collective with individual needs and wants set aside in order to serve the greater good of the Core. The subsector is mostly surrounded by less-populated, provincial subsectors; therefore, the transportation of its goods requires the assistance of long-range freighters that bridge the gaps to the other high-population worlds of the sector. Many of these starships are constructed in this subsector at the shipyards on Per, Kakhu Gash and Sanches itself. While the yards on Sanches are also used by military contractors, the majority of their products are civilian in nature and include the production of megafreighters of 50,000–500,000 tons and ranging from jump-1 to jump-4 in performance.

Almost all of the worlds in the subsector retain their original Vilani names with the sole exception being Sanches itself. Most believe that the name is simply a corruption of Sanshes, a common Vilani surname, but it was in fact renamed by Terran Admiral Anatoliy Sanches, whose naval forces conquered the system late in the Interstellar Wars. After setting up shop on the planet, he renamed it after himself and left the remainder of world names in the subsector intact.

The subsector economy is bolstered by two small jump-1 mains: the Sanches Cluster to spinward and the Quadrant I Main, which dips into Apge, Perite and Mekee. Sanches' high-population worlds have economies that far outstrip those of its neighbours and Sanchesian traders rarely pass up the chance to remind them of this. Sanches' well-to-do worlds sees themselves as powerful engines of prosperity for which their neighbours should be thankful. Sanchesian arrogance is mostly tolerated as long as the Credits keep flowing into their coffers.

The Sanches subsector is defended by the Imperial Navy's 200th Fleet with headquarters at the Sanches Navy Base. The navy has a large presence in the subsector and regularly harbours squadrons in the Gir, Khid and Neki systems in order to quell problems on some of the troublesome worlds of the neighbouring Dagudashaag sector. While Dagudashaag has its own Imperial Navy fleet elements, the Core has expressed concern over their seeming inability to establish a degree of lasting peace on many of its worlds. The spectre of the Ilelish Revolt still looms large and the Imperium is determined that such a thing should never occur again, especially on its proverbial doorstep.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Alekvadin	0811		B675AAB-E	Hi Ht In	A	G
Arla Un	0512	N	B513733-B	Ic Na		G
Dankahlas	0315		B685541-B	Ag Ga Ni		G
Darnii Kimi	0218	S	D87887B-6			G
Dudin	0316	S	D528A89-B	Hi In		G
Emuuis	0216	N	B422369-D	Ht Lo Po		G
Gaadir	0511	S	D586836-6	Ri		G
Gir	0212	N	B645437-B	Ni		G
Idpuu	0116		B585756-B	Ag Ri		G
Iggaar	0619	S	B7589A8-B	Hi		G
Inir	0220		D88A548-9	Ni Wa		G
Iruukzi	0820		B776610-9	Ag Ni		
Kakhu Gash	0812		A845887-A			G
Kaman	0513	S	D772412-6	Ni		G
Kash	0411	S	D584400-8	Ni		G
Kein	0120		C544403-A	Ni		
Keshi	0816		B792566-B	Ni		G
Khid	0114	NS	B550401-C	De Ht Ni Po		
Khishi	0113		C798200-A	Ga Lo		G
Khukhi	0612		B667998-A	Hi		
Kiishad	0714		B6A78BD-B	Fl	A	G
Maarshigervlig	0314		B8A588A-A	Fl		G
Maish Akush	0313	N S	B432454-C	Ht Ni Po		G
Neki	0117	N	B664589-9	Ag Ni		
Nirgem	0420	N	B6A7422-A	Fl Ni		G
Per	0112		A673410-C	Ht Ni		G
Rundan	0516	N	B76A945-9	Hi Wa		G
Ruuni	0713		B433557-D	Ht Ni Po		G
Sanches	0416	N S	A654AC9-F	Hi Ht	A	G
Shardi	0418		E43398A-A	Hi Na Po		G
Shiga Sha	0517		A726423-E	Ht Ni		G
Shiinaua	0414	S	D561520-6	Ni		G
Uupig	0718		D797114-7	Lo		G
Uurze	0319		B434220-D	Ht Lo		G
Zan	0519	N	B100103-F	Ht Lo Va		G


To Apge
To Kuriishe
To Mekee
To Bunkeria
0111
0211
0311
0511
GAADIR
D-6
D586836-6
0711
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ALEKVADIN
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0414
SHIINAUA
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0115
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DANKAHLAS
B-B
B685541-B
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IDPUU
B-B
B585756-B
0316
DUDIN
D-B
D528A89-B
0516
RUNDAN
B-9
B76A945-9
0716
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EMUUIS
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C-A
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B776610-9
Gas Giant
B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
Imperial Naval Base
Imperial Scout Base
Secure System
Amber Zone
X-boat Route
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)

ARLA UN

Arla Un orbits a bright blue-white subgiant star called Kir Aikhalingas. The Arla Un 'day' is 263.8 standard days long. The bright side of the planet heats up to a white-hot 365° Celsius and its dark side can drop to as low as 125° below zero. Arla Un appears to have been subjected to multiple large impacts that have stripped away much of its lithosphere and crust, leaving the metal-rich mantle exposed. The planet has a trace atmosphere and an oceanic slurry of water, tar and sulphuric acid that moves along longitudinal cracks, canyons and through deep veins under its surface. A high degree of volcanic and tectonic activity results in an ever-changing geography with crumbling hills and mountains, and new fissures carved into its extensive lava plains with each passing year.

Arla Un posed a technical challenge to the conservative Vilani that they chose to pass up. It was deemed better to go after the 'low-hanging fruit' than to brave the dangers of a half-molten planet. The system was left uninhabited until the Rule of Man and even then, only survey outposts were established on the world. Only in the year 565 did permanent settlements begin to appear on Arla Un. There are three types of inhabited structures on the planet: subterranean, surface and gravitic. Underground cities have been emplaced in relatively stable pockets, far away from volcanism and underground acid oceans. Its surface 'cities' are actually wheeled or tracked platforms that slowly rove around the planet, while the gravitic habitations float close to its surface to avoid direct exposure to the powerful rays of Kir Aikhalingas. Surface and gravitic cities use a combination of imagery and data collected by rad-shielded satellites and heat-shielded rovers and drones to guarantee their safe transit around the world. With new crevices, river valleys and reservoirs developing all the time, they must take care to ensure that there are no surprises in front of them. The constant movement of living on a mobile platform is unusual but for the most part, they function as typical cities complete with all the trappings of a modern, high-tech civilisation. Arla Un has two Class B downports emplaced in mobile cities, one on tracks and the other on a gravitic platform. The largest of the cities is a massive linked caravan of tracked platforms, which provides housing for over 200,000 people.

The highport is an industrial facility, mostly concerned with shipping Arla Un's metals and minerals off planet and importing the many goods and services that its citizens need. There is a residential and hospitality district but for the most part, the highport is quite utilitarian. The majority of permanent residences are on (or just above) the planet itself. The world is governed by the Arla Un Mining Consortium, a federal union of representatives from its mobile and subterranean cities, which manages the exploitation of the planet's natural resources and acts as a mediator with large, off-world mining concerns. Megacorporate and sector-wide corporate mining and resource-extraction firms have attempted to invest in Arla Un by purchasing local companies but none have broken ranks thus far. The Arla Unians are solemnly proud of the way they have tamed the hostile environment of their homeworld and have an almost nationalistic fervour when it comes to their independence.

BRIGHT-SIDE CRAWLER

As much as they might try to avoid it, there are times when a mission to the bright side of Arla Un is necessary. The bright-side crawler is just the vehicle for the job. The crawler is designed to withstand the intense heat of Arla Un's beaming blue-white subgiant star and can transport a crew of six (one driver and five passengers) across the bright face in safety. Arla Un's mercurial landscape requires caution, so the crawler is outfitted with top-notch sensory and navigation systems. Its satellite uplink provides constant and secure communications with the world's roving cities and starports.

TL	11
SKILL	Drive (track)
AGILITY	0
SPEED (CRUISE)	Medium (Slow)
RANGE (CRUISE)	100 years
CREW	1
PASSENGERS	5
CARGO	1 ton
HULL	84
SHIPPING	14 tons
COST	MCr2.579

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Airlock, Autopilot (advanced), Communications System (improved, satellite uplink), Computer/1, Environment Protection (hostile, vacuum), Fire Extinguishers, Galley (seats 5), Life Support (long term), Manipulator Arm (basic), Navigation System (improved), Sensors (improved, sensor mast).

ARMOUR

FRONT	3	REAR	3	SIDES	3

EQUIPMENT

Autopilot (skill level)	+3
Communications (range)	500km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1
Camouflage (Recon DM)	—
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—

DUDIN

The society of Dudin is what many citizens of the Imperium would consider an industrial dystopian nightmare. However, its people are by and large quite content with their lives. Dudinian culture is an extremist version of the Vilani caste system, made possible by large-scale cloning and genetic engineering. In traditional Vilani culture, individuals may choose their caste wherein they are apprenticed to a master who teaches them to perform a specialised task or skill. On Dudin, caste decisions are made by the Executive Bureaux, the bureaucratic institution that runs the planet and whose processes and procedures are remarkably similar to those of Makhidkarun, the Vilani megacorporation that once ruled this region of space during the reign of the era of the Ziru Sirka. While the influence of Makhidkarun is obvious to those familiar with the company, the origins of Dudin's rather unique application of its culture and techniques has been lost in the annals of time. Dudin's current modus operandi has been practiced since the dark ages of the Long Night.

Dudin strictly manages its population to ensure that there are approximately 60 billion inhabitants to work in its millions of factories. These factories range anywhere from massive industrial complexes, to small fabricators or home-based businesses. The planet itself is not easily habitable with only a very thin and tainted atmosphere and 80 percent of its surface covered in frozen water. Virtually all of its people live in arcologies or orbital habitats where they are packed in like lemmings. Over the centuries, Dudinians have been conditioned to live comfortably in such an environment. Furthermore, the nucleus accumbens, amygdala and prefrontal cortex of their brains have been altered to require less dopamine to achieve feelings of happiness and satisfaction. The result has been that no matter what their vocation, Dudians are almost universally content with what they do. When they are not engaged in labour, Dudinians become involved with a number of simple pastimes that unaltered humans would find trite or even boring. These activities enable them to comfortably operate in a society that offers little opportunity for upward mobility and requires them to engage in repetitive labour, day in and day out. Ironically, the primary products that they produce are electronics for complex and extravagant entertainment equipment that is used throughout the Core and beyond. Dudinians would find such devices overly stimulating, possibly even causing them physical pain. They prefer the simplicity of low-tech artistic, hobbyist or gaming pastimes that do not threaten to overload their pleasure centres.

While most live solitary lives, there are also families on Dudin, married couples who have children just like anywhere else in Imperial space; however, once born, children are subjected to a litany of genetic engineering procedures to ensure they 'meet the standards' of the Executive Bureaux. More often than not, they do; after all, the vast majority of them were born to Dudinian parents and ancestors who were genetically treated themselves. The Executive Bureaux does not actively encourage families since they do not need to. If the population ever drops off, they can manufacture as many clones as necessary to fill labour shortages. The larger factories use some degree of automation but the system is mostly based on human labour, not robotic. Most tasks performed by robots are those that are exceptionally dangerous or require greater strength or force.

Genetic mutations occasionally occur that make random Dudinians resistant or unsuitable for conditioning. These individuals are deported to a nearby world where they are allowed to live out their normal, decidedly non-Dudinian lives. Eugenics are not practiced on Dudin. The elderly are allowed to age and remain a part of society, living out a comfortable, if dull, retirement; however, little in the way of healthcare is provided for them. Once their utility to the Bureaux has expired, Dudinian society sees little value in investing much to keep them alive.

SANCHES

Sanches is a moon of the gas giant, Eniiluim. The gas giant is tidally locked with system primary, Khaslar, and Sanches is tidally locked to Eniiluim. However, Sanches orbits the gas giant once every 48.3 hours, giving it with a reasonably standard day-to-night cycle when light from Khaslar is not obscured by Eniiluim itself. Sanches' proximity to Eniiluim and its other

moons give the world complex tidal effects. Sanches is a cold world but not terribly so, except when in the shadow of Eniiluim. Its inhabitants can spend time outdoors with only a light covering during its 'summer', which occurs every few weeks because of Eniiluim's rapid orbit around Khaslar. Sanches is the beneficiary of extensive terraforming that occurred during the brief reign of the Rule of Man. The world's atmosphere was thickened and its hydrosphere enhanced by bombarding it with icy planetoids and cometary bodies in what were then desolate regions of the planet.

Sanches is run by a highly fluidic governmental structure in which its leading 25 corporations submit government officers to a body called the Board of Designates. The factors that constitute a leading corporation are many and coalesced by a complex algorithm. Profits are the key factor but consistency, public sentiment, fame, tradition, altruism and other factors are considered as well. The makeup of the board can shift from day-to-day – sometimes hour-to-hour – which results in transition times that humans, even with cybernetic enhancements, robotic assistance, expert programmes, high-speed transportation and other technological aids are not always capable of making. For this reason, the ruling corporations have AI designates who take interim control on their biological designate's behalf. The period of interim control can be as little as a few seconds to several days, depending on the circumstances. The bottom rungs of the board are often held by corporate executives who do not believe they will have the position for long and therefore abstain from voting or participating in board events until their position has solidified or they lose it to the next designate. Others have jockeyed themselves into positions for months, sometimes even years, to have the opportunity to obtain a board position. It is sometimes considered to be a strategic move to allow one's AI to occupy the position for a number of days or weeks in order to befuddle the competition. The top 11 board positions have been held by the same corporations for over a decade, although their order has shifted considerably. A tremendous amount of prestige is held by those designates who occupy the top five spots.

Artificial intelligence is anathema to most Vilani-influenced cultures but Sanches is a unique world. It was annexed by the Terrans late in the Interstellar Wars, oppressed by military rule for centuries and was the capital of a Solomani-dominated pocket empire during much of the Long Night. Even today, the more conservative governments of the Core chide Sanches for its willing enablement of AI for such an important role but it seems to work for them. The unique governmental structure establishes a kind of order that only a Sanchesian can truly appreciate. To outsiders, who cannot see the waves of change coming, events on Sanches appear to be unbridled chaos. For example, one day a given orbital starport might have access to certain services and resources and the next day it will not, all based on the fortunes of its parent company. Educated Sanchesians can see these changes coming and wisely invest their time and effort into facilities controlled by consistent board members and typically do not waste their time on the mercurial fortunes of corporations likely to lose their designations. Bottom-rung designates are known to offer certain complimentary services to help solidify their positions; therefore, by speculating on who the lower tier will be, one can obtain free refuelling and other services if they time the market right. The futures market in the corporations ranked 26–50 is always active with investors striving to pick the eventual winners. One might make a fortune by buying the stock of a corporation just before they acquire a long-term position on the board.

The Imperial Navy and Scout Service both have bases in the system. Each service has administrative and recruiting offices on Sanches' highport and downport but also have more extravagant bases on other satellites of Eniiluim. The main scout base is on the virtually airless rockball moon, Daashadkiu, a distant natural satellite known for its numerous active geysers, which spout methane effluvium high into its trace atmosphere. The naval base is an artificial satellite, a massive spherical structure that orbits the gas giant approximately 100,000km from Sanches.

MEKEE

Mekee is a sparsely populated subsector marked by two stellar chasms and no fewer than eight small stellar clusters, each of which is referred to as a 'county' by the vacant office of the subsector duke. Mekee's previous duke was killed in a duel with a high-ranking member of the peerage from Fornast. Duelling is frowned upon in the Core but reversion to the barbaric practice still occurs from time-to-time. Duels must be sanctioned by the Emperor and attended by an Imperial observer, and this only after a lengthy bureaucratic process and a great deal of paperwork is completed. The process typically takes 6–9 months. The hope is that by making the code duello cumbersome and inconvenient, cooler heads will ultimately prevail and the whole thing will be called off. It usually works quite well but it obviously failed as far as the Duke of Mekee was concerned.

The subsector is now managed by the eight nobles who represent each of the counties. In truth, most of Mekee's clusters are far too small to warrant the assignment of a count so several are barons and knights. By Imperial law the duke's heir should have succeeded him as subsector duke but the ducal family had been besmirched by scandal and the Emperor temporarily suspended their patent. The leading nobles of each county come to Ushra once every 100 days in order to manage the subsector's affairs. It is rare that all eight can make it to the meeting every time, so the rules have recently been adjusted so that a quorum is declared if six are present, although there is little administration to be done. Mekee is a disparate collection of small fiefs that have little in common with one another and it seems to get along just fine without a large degree of oversight. Nevertheless, rules are rules and the peers of the realm have obligations.

The most significant system in the subsector by far is Depot, which provides personnel, training, berthing and maintenance services for the Core Sector Fleet. The world of Depot Prime – or Uugnii, as the Vilani called it – is theorised to have been terraformed but never settled by the Ancients. Perhaps even more fascinating are the ruins of a multi-world civilisation on Adguu Uun, Guun and Mukiid. There is a body of evidence that indicates these may be the remnants of a species that originated on one of the three worlds and reached the other two by sublight spacecraft. None of the artefacts that have been found appear to be of human origin and they are too recent to have been built by the Ancients who vanished approximately 300,000 years ago. The ruins on Mukiid have been reasonably well preserved but archaeologists are still uncertain about many things, including what caused this multi-world species to disappear from the galactic scene.

Most traffic from the Core subsector does not flow through Mekee, unless it is naval traffic making its way to Depot or scout ships travelling to the IISS way station on Ushra. Mekee is a backwater and traversing it is difficult for most civilian starships so most simply go around rather than through it. Merchants generally avoid Mekee like the plague, preferring instead to ply the Sylean Main to rimward or the Quadrant I Main to coreward. The only reliable commercial traffic through the subsector are bulk freighters from the Achenaar Antilles line, which keeps its worlds supplied with the goods that they need.

The Imperial Navy 3rd Fleet, headquartered at Muskoxah, has only three squadrons but a large number of auxiliary ships, mostly fleet couriers used to carry news rapidly to Capital from the spinward subsectors of the Core and beyond. Two of the squadrons are typical BatRons, which patrol the subsector when not otherwise engaged and one TankRon, stationed at Gipkikhar, which is present to lend assistance to fleet elements making their way outward from the Core subsector.

COPPELIA

Coppelia is the site of Research Station Gamma, which was founded in 882. An initial eight-person team was put in place to study the anomalous gravity field of the system mainworld. While most of the planet has a consistent 0.45G, regions of Coppelia, ranging in size from 10,000 to 500,000 square kilometres, have been seen to fluctuate from 0.3 to 0.7G. These gravitic disturbances last anywhere from a few seconds to several hours after which the region slowly returns to the median 0.45G.

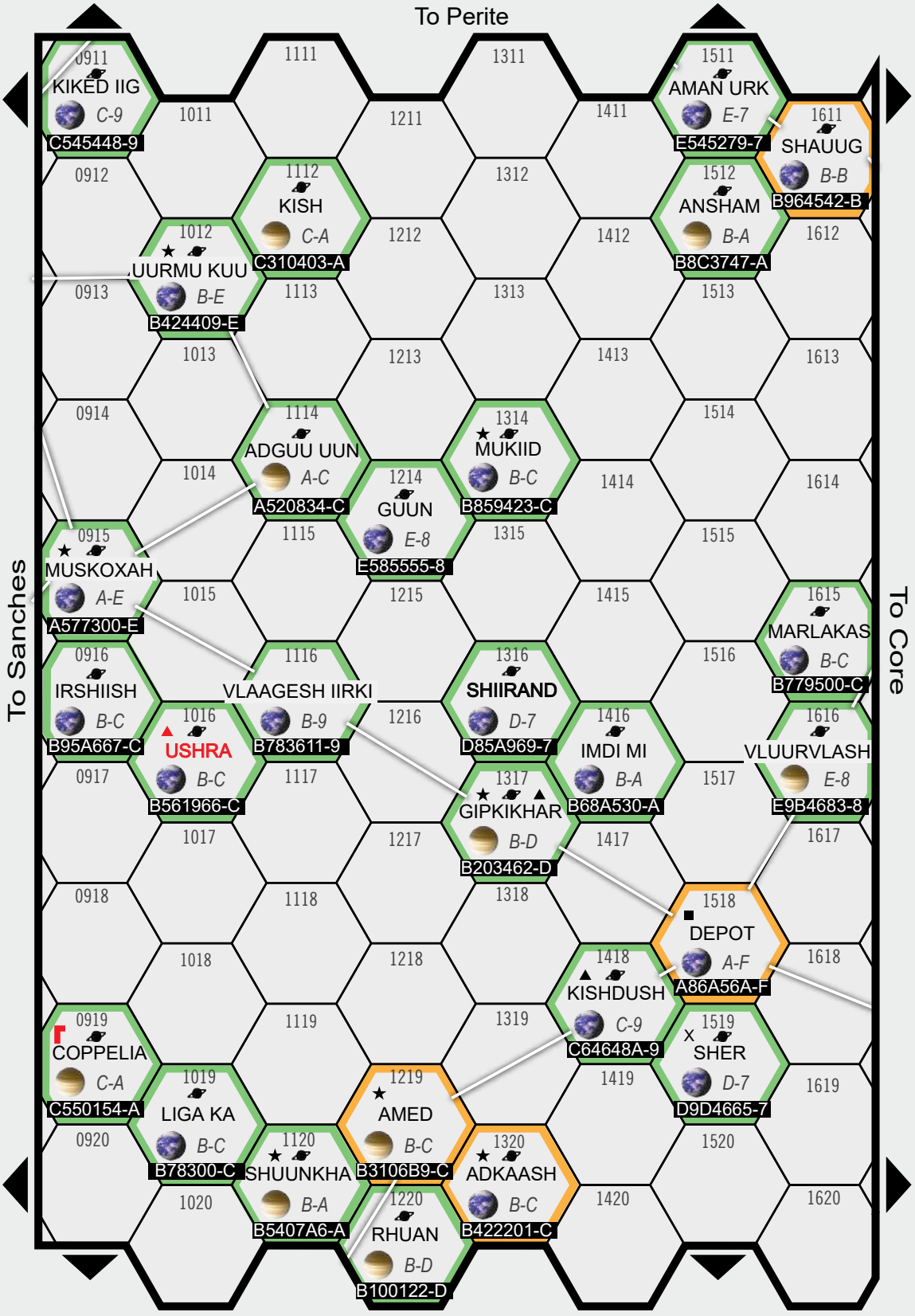
As so often happens with unexplained scientific phenomena, the public suspects that the Ancients must be involved. A great deal of their technology was so advanced and was developed by a culture so different than that of Humaniti that the assumption is natural. However, there is no hard evidence that the Ancients had anything to do with the world's gravitic anomalies. No actual Ancients sites have been discovered on Coppelia and none of the other tell-tale signs of their passing are present.

The research team was eventually expanded to 50 and a small downport was built for the scientists with a single landing pad large enough to dock a spacecraft of up to 100 tons. There is no highport at Coppelia but there are several satellites in place to measure gravitic disturbances from orbit. In addition, one or more scientific craft are often present, usually Type-L laboratory ships that are uniquely suited for the study of such phenomena.

DEPOT

Depots are the focal points of the Imperial Navy base system. There is one Depot per sector (except at Delphi, where there are two, and the Spinward Marches, where there are none). Depots contain massive shipyards and maintenance facilities, support services, administration centres, housing and recreation facilities, technical services and training grounds for naval personnel.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Adguu Uun	1114		A520834-C	De Ht Na Po		G
Adkaash	1320	N	B422201-C	Ht Lo Po	A	G
Aman Urk	1511		E545279-7	Lo		G
Amed	1219	N	B3106B9-C	Ht Na Ni	A	
Ansham	1512		B8C3747-A	Fl		G
Coppelia	0919		C550154-A	De Lo Po		G
Depot	1518	D	A86A56A-F	Ht Ni Wa	A	
Gipkikhar	1317	N S	B203462-D	Ht Ic Ni Va		G
Guun	1214		E585555-8	Ag Ni		G
Imdi Mi	1416		B68A530-A	Ni Wa		G
Irshiish	0916		B95A667-C	Ht Ni Wa		G
Kiked Iig	0911		C545448-9	Ni		G
Kish	1112		C310403-A	Ni		G
Kishdush	1418	S	C64648A-9	Ht Ni		G
Liga Ka	1019		B783300-C	Ht Lo		G
Marlakasi	1615		B779500-C	Ht Ni		G
Mukiid	1314	N	B859423-C	Ht Ni		G
Muskoxah	0915	N	A577300-E	Ht Lo		G
Rhuan	1220		B100122-D	Ht Lo Va		G
Shauug	1611		B964542-B	Ag Ni	A	G
Sher	1519		D9D4665-7	Ni		G
Shiirand	1316		D85A969-7	Hi Wa		G
Shuunkha	1120	N	B5407A6-A	De Po		G
Ushra	1016	W	B561966-C	Hi Ht		G
Uurmu Kuu	1012	N	B424400-E	Ht Ni		G
Vlaagesh Iirki	1116		B783611-9	Ni Ri		
Vluurvlash	1616		E9B4683-8	Fl Ni		G



MEKEE SUBSECTOR

The system mainworld of the Depot system is called Depot Prime. Depot Prime is special because it is a world that was touched by the Ancients. While there are no Ancients sites present in the system per se, they left their indelible mark on the planet. Hundreds of thousands of years before this world was named Uugnii by the Vilani, it was terraformed by the Ancients. Extensive research has revealed that it was once a large rockball world from the outer system. The Ancients somehow moved it into the habitable zone, made its core spin to give it an electromagnetic field that it previously lacked, got it rotating so that it has a 36.7-hour day and brought in enough water to cover it with oceans and gases to give it a standard atmosphere. Scientists theorise that the project was incomplete. Evidence indicates that they may have been preparing to thicken the atmosphere further and activate tectonic plates so islands might emerge out of the ocean depths. Perhaps the Final War of the Ancients interrupted the project or maybe they just moved on, leaving the world unfinished. Whatever the case may be, they somehow managed the titanic task of creating a spinning, habitable world where there once was none.

Vilani priests believed the world was sacred and prevented large numbers of people from colonising it. The religion that protected Uugnii died out during the Long Night, leaving a remnant population behind. After rediscovering the world, the Imperium relocated the survivors so they could claim it for their own and make it into the first Depot of the Imperial Navy.

Depot system is the headquarters of the Core Sector Fleet. Most Sector Fleet assets are deployed elsewhere but a number of its battleships and dreadnoughts are always present in the system, even in peacetime. It is also the home of the Depot Fleet, which consists of three sections:

- Training Fleet – Formed of ships of the line that have been brought to Depot to train naval personnel in their use. Every type of ship in service to the Imperial Navy is present at one time or another. Training Fleet ships are on loan from both the Sector Fleet and numbered fleets, and typically return to service after a designated period of time. Common classes of ship (for example, mid-size cruisers) may see extended duty in the Training Fleet and remain in system for months or even years, as required. The Training Fleet also contains Adversary Squadrons, ships designated to play the role of enemy ships in training exercises. In most cases, these are Imperial Navy ships outfitted with weaponry, software and other elements to make them resemble enemy ships as best they can. In other cases, these are actual captured enemy spacecraft refitted for training purposes. Assignment to an Adversary Squadron is highly desired by members of the officer corps. Some of the most battle-ready officers of the line learned their craft by having served aboard the 'enemy ships' of an Adversary Squadron.
- Mothball Fleet – The last stop for many of the navy's starships is the Depot Mothball Fleet. Ships are brought to one of Depot's maintenance hangars for a thorough inspection, given preservative treatment and then designated for one of the following: refit and reassignment to a colonial or reserve fleet, the breaker yard to be disassembled for scrap, equipped with automation and used as targets in live-fire exercises or storage at one of several auxiliary facilities on one of the other planets or planetoid belts in Depot system. Assignment to storage usually means the navy is uncertain about quite what they want to do with the ship and that it requires more time to make the decision.

- Security Fleet – The alert and highly active Security Fleet defends Depot from all possible dangers. This fleet consists of system defence boats, jump-capable early-warning squadrons, decommissioned battle riders that function essentially as large SDBs and armoured planetoid monitors. The latter are composed of planetoids drawn from Depot's two belts and include some absolutely massive specimens. *Depot-PM1A* is a 1.5-million ton buffered planetoid, equipped with a top-of-the-line meson spinal mount. The planetoid is bristling with dozens of bays and turret weaponry as well. This and other planetoid monitors also contain multiple fighter wings.

Hundreds of space stations orbit Depot Prime and sit perched in its Lagrange Points. Most of these are hangars for Imperial Navy spacecraft and shipyards where the largest naval starships are built. Some stations are reserved for training purposes and contain simulators, vacc suit and EVA training grounds and zero-G firing ranges.

The navy's primary administration, personnel and training facilities are on the surface of Depot Prime. While the world has no land masses to speak of, it does have many sea mounts that approach the surface of its oceans. The navy has built structures on these natural formations, most of which jut from beneath the ocean surface in domes and spires. The largest of these facilities is Depot Prime Downport, which includes an extensive surface area to land and dock naval starships and small craft. Depot Prime is also heavily laden with defensive structures ranging from missile batteries and point defence lasers both on its primary structures and on floating artificial islands scattered throughout its oceans. There are also multiple deep-site meson guns implanted at confidential and highly secure locations beneath the ocean floor.

Life at Depot Prime can be a pleasant experience during peacetime. While there is always work to be done, shore duty is also a time to take a break from long tours aboard a naval starship. Living in one of the world's many residential districts or artificial islands, one might even forget they were in the navy if not for the uniforms, flyovers and the blinking lights of the shipyards and space stations in the night sky. Extensive recreational facilities are present for naval personnel on liberty and all sorts of entertainments and services are available. Over the centuries, the oceans have been stocked with fish and other sea life and fishing excursions are a favourite pastime.

Despite the languorous aura at such facilities, the navy does its best to ensure productivity and engagement among its staff with frequent reminders that a return to active duty is never far away. Peacetime or not, naval Depots must be ever vigilant in spite of the fact that large-scale wars are few and far between. Should the Imperium ever go to war, its Depots will become contested battlegrounds.

SHER

The Sher system was virtually uninhabited until the early years of the Third Imperium when it became host to the Core's largest prison system. There are several facilities, each designed to house criminals of various stripes, from organised crime bosses to mass murderers. The prisons are reserved only for those who have broken Imperial law or severe violations of subsector and planetary laws with a sentence of life without parole. All of the prison facilities on the planet are located in the murky nitrogen soup of its lower atmosphere. Some are subterranean and others are bunkers half submerged in rocky plains and valleys. Stepping outside without the aid of an environment suit brings about a quick death as cold nitrogen replaces oxygen in the lungs, causing asphyxiation. As if the environment alone were not sufficient to prevent escape attempts, the prisons use high-technology surveillance and access systems to monitor and limit each prisoner's every move.

The civilian population of the planet are housed in cities on the planet's mountains and plateaus, where the atmosphere is a breathable oxygen-nitrogen mix. Workers take the high-speed maglev train to work in the dismal prison facilities below. There is no naval base in the Sher system but the navy does have an administrative office on the planet, which reports to the base on Temra. Temra provides offworld management of the prison planet and supplies its civilian personnel.

Core

Core is home to Capital, the world where the Emperor of the Third Imperium sits upon the Iridium Throne. Because of their proximity to Capital, the worlds of the Core subsector are scrutinised closely and modifications are made when it is deemed that the safety of Capital is at stake. Some of these alterations are subtle and some are blunt. Unrequested surveillance software might be added to a starport security system or the Imperial Guard might drop troops onto a world where trouble is suspected. While the Imperium is not shy about doing what it must to protect Capital, it tries to do so with a soft touch – or at least the appearance of one. One of the credos of Imperial rule is to defend the space between worlds without applying a heavy hand to local politics. Individual worlds are left to their own devices as long as they do not break Imperial law, allowing for a broad range of social and political variation. This is also true in the Core subsector but the Imperium does have its security to think about. As with any powerful polity, there are those who would do it harm if they could and the Imperium pulls out all the stops to defend the Emperor.

Most of the worlds of the Core subsector understand their unique place in the Imperium and tolerate a more intrusive government presence. Capital does what it can to remind them how unique and important they are. The fact that there are a number of Sylean worlds goes a long way to ensure a cooperative environment. The Syleans were largely responsible for the success of the Third Imperium and those with Sylean blood are especially proud of their part in its history and more willingly submit to the higher level of scrutiny.

Core contains 11 of the 25 worlds that form the Sylean Worlds cultural zone. These worlds were settled by pureblood Syleans and people of mixed Sylean blood after the formation of the Third Imperium and were casually referred to as 'the Sylean Worlds' long before they acquired the official designation. During the Civil War, the Moot refused to endorse many of the pretenders who laid claim to the throne. Naval battles were fought in Capital and other nearby star systems. The Sylean Worlds called upon the Imperial Navy's 1st and 4th Fleets to protect Capital and the heart of the Imperium. The Moot waited for a proper candidate to appear and, for a time, the Sylean worlds became an autonomous region. To a degree, this event inoculated the rest of the Imperium from the chaos of the Civil War. The move localised the conflict and enabled the remainder of the Imperium to carry on, unaffected by events on Capital. The region was later converted into an official cultural zone to harbour and preserve Sylean culture and serve as a reminder that when things get tough, the Imperium closes ranks and safeguards its capital.

The subsector has two reserve worlds, Lectorsen and Crompton. Lectorsen's unique twilight-band jungles caught the interest of Emperor Martin II, an avid naturalist who made it an Imperial protectorate and emplaced a soft interdiction to strictly control access to the planet. The world's extensive staff of administrative and wildlife maintenance professionals carefully cultivate the planet to preserve its pristine state. With a far smaller staff, Crompton has been reserved as a playground for the Imperial family and other high-ranking nobles who come for rest and recreation. Crompton's hardy ecosphere is stocked with game from throughout the Imperium. Its staff conducts, extensive safaris for the world's guests, during which they may hunt or simply observe its animals.

There is a cultural rift between the Sylean Worlds and a group known as the Wayward Worlds. The Wayward Worlds are not an official district or cultural zone but do have a unique place in history that has some carryover to modern times. These were the worlds that were part of the Sylean Federation at the dawn of the Third Imperium but chose to reject the offer of membership in the fledgling empire. Cleon Zhunastu accepted this betrayal with aplomb but ultimately acquired these worlds over time. In truth, they had no choice. As the Imperium grew, the Wayward Worlds became increasingly isolated and were ultimately forced to accept Imperial membership. It is said that time heals all wounds and such is the case with the Wayward Worlds. The descendants of the traitorous powers who rejected Cleon's advances no longer pay for the sins of their ancestors; however, the schism did result in a distinct, non-Sylean culture that is still evident among these worlds to this day.

In spite of its high security, the Core subsector is part of a vibrant trade route: the Sylean Main, which includes all of the Wayward Worlds, several of the Sylean Worlds extending into Kaskii, along the coreward flanks of Chant and Cemplas, and ultimately broadens to include most of the systems in Bunkeria before wending its way into the neighbouring Dagudashaag Sector. Most of these subsectors are lightly populated, so the Sylean Main is not as lucrative as those found in heavily populated

sectors like Massilia or Ilelish. Savvy traders contend that any shortcomings the Sylean Main may have are more than made up for by the sheer quantity of development opportunities present. While Capital has always sought to avoid becoming directly involved in the affairs of its worlds, it has been somewhat of an embarrassment that the trade main upon which it sits is so utterly provincial and underdeveloped. There are those among the nobility and megacorporate community who seek to change that.

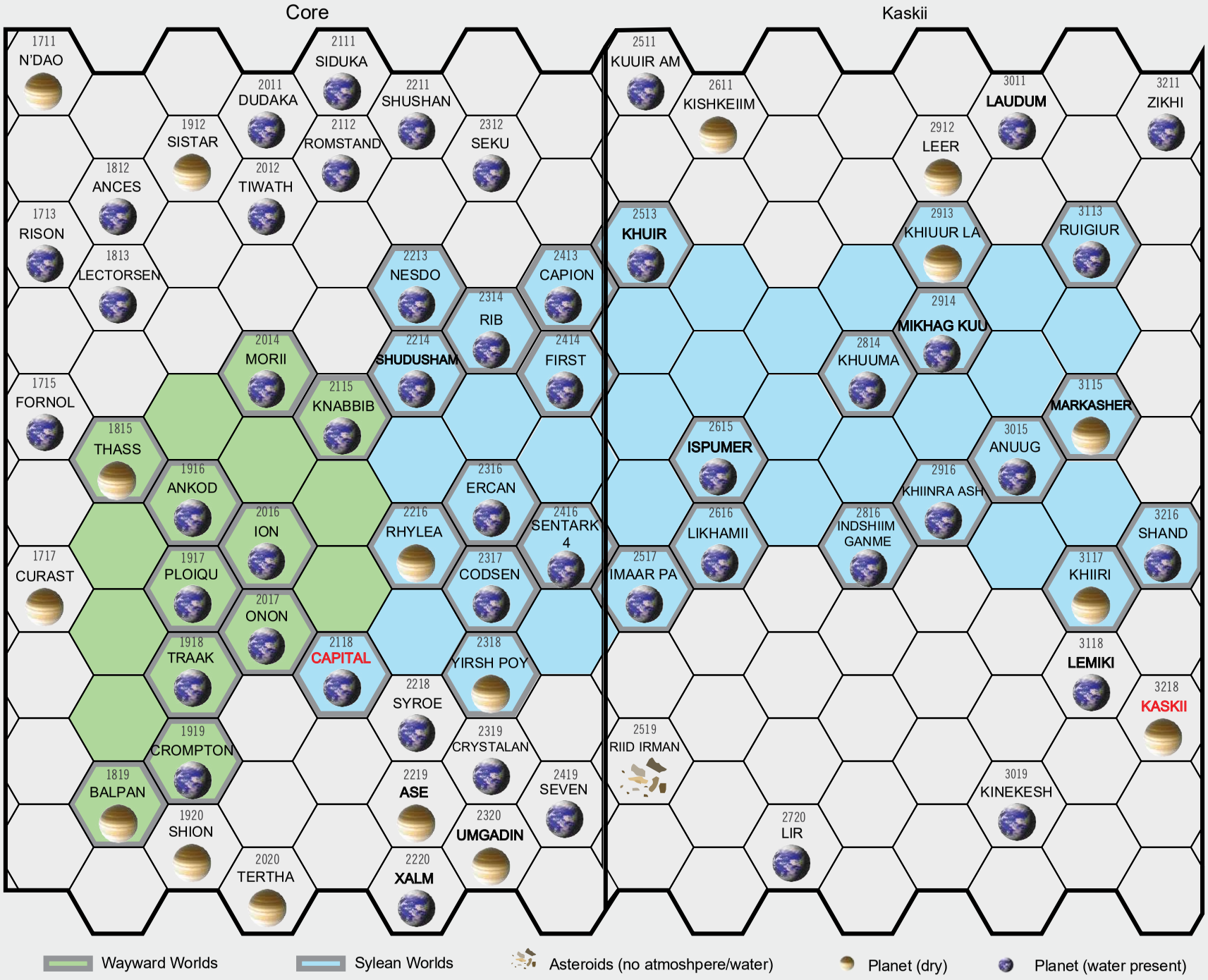
The Core subsector is defended by the hallowed 1st Fleet, which is headquartered on Capital itself with squadrons spread throughout the subsector. The fleet consists of eight full squadrons including five BatRons, two AssaultRons and a TankRon to assist with deployments and training exercises. The Core's Subsector Fleet is supported by large elements of the Sector Fleet, which are rotated into service in the subsector regularly. In addition to its many bases, there is the Imperial Marine Training Centre on Codsen, a rough outpost with a challenging environment where marines are trained in the arts of survival. The system has not been assigned a base symbol on purpose; only barebones housing and other facilities are present, which hint at the challenging environment that lies before trainees.

THE WAYWARD WORLDS

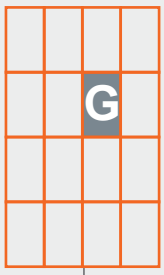
At the dawn of the Third Imperium, Cleon Zhunastu's appeal to the worlds of the Sylean Federation were not accepted by all. Thirteen worlds initially rejected membership in the new Imperium. Cleon managed to convince six of them to reconsider only to see three flip-flop once again shortly after his coronation. Only eight of the original Sylean worlds accepted roles as founding systems of the new empire outright. The founding worlds were Kiiri (now Nesdo), Lauursha (Shudusham), Khash (Rhylea), Laairer (Rib), Idmum (Ercan), Gikuu (Codsen), Kuunen Ish (Yirsh Poy) and of course Sylea itself, which became Capital. The Syleans had deep cultural resentment of the Vilani after a millennium of oppression and were quick to shed the Vilani names of most of their worlds. Only Shudusham, which had already changed its name shortly after being contacted by the Sylean Federation, retained its name largely due to the presence of such a large Vilani population.

The Wayward Worlds were Unrair (now Thass), Unkuu (Balpan), Irurk (Ankod), Aggii Ganaan (Ploiqu), Irmap Muu (Traak), Nirinirk (Crompton), Bala (Morii), Zuarkri (Ion) and Kain (Onon). Many of these worlds retained their original names for many years before being renamed one-by-one in an attempt to shed the burden of their traitorous past.

THE WAYWARD WORLDS

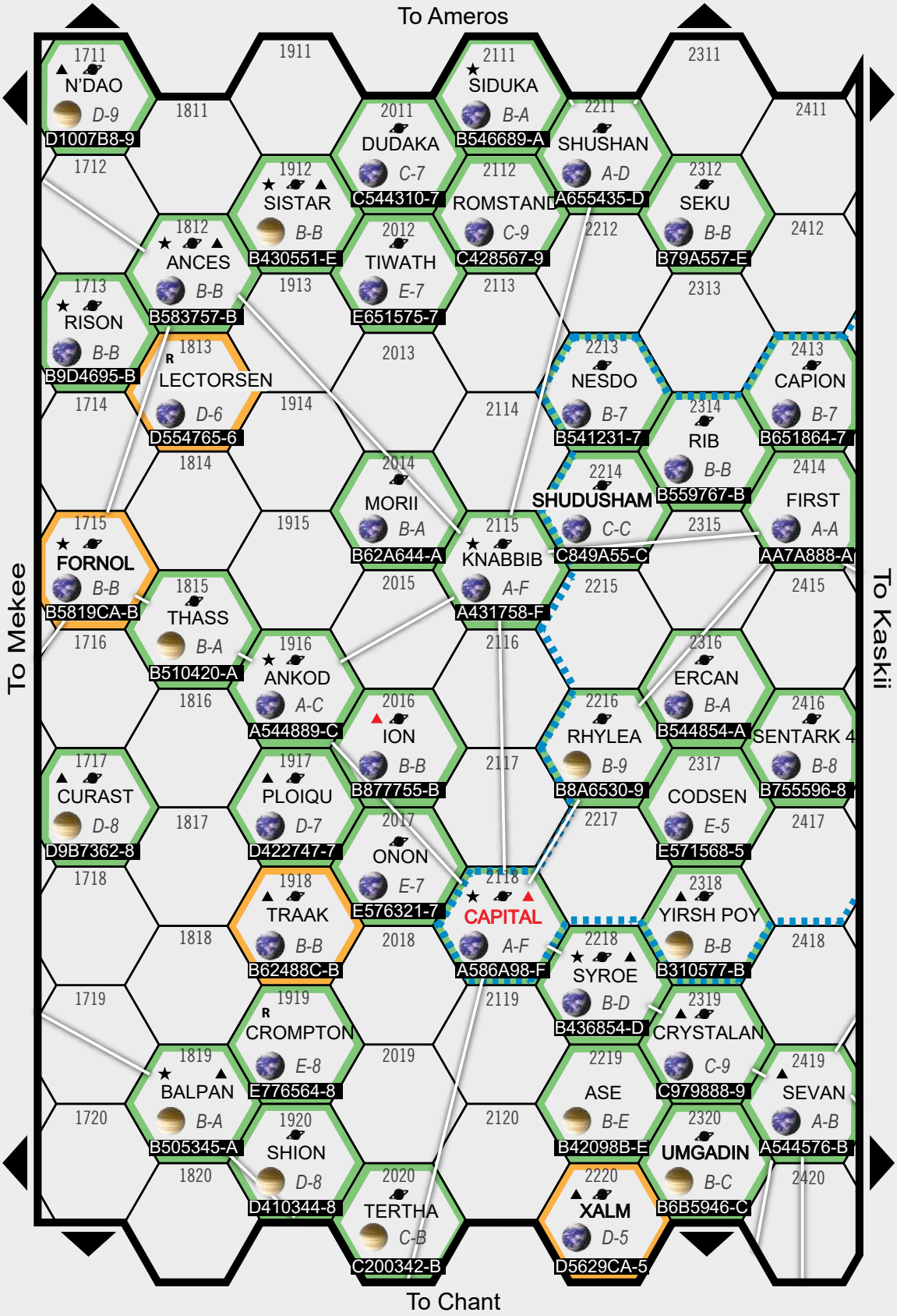


Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Ances	1812	N S	B583757-B	Ri		G
Ankod	1916	N	A544889-C	Ht		G
Ase	2219		B42098B-E	De Hi Ht In Na Po		
Balpan	1819	N S	B505345-A	Ic Lo Va		
Capion	2413		B651864-7	Po		G
Capital	2118	N W	A586A98-F	Hi Ht		G
Codsen	2317		E571568-5	Lt Ni		
Crompton	1919		E776564-8	Ag Ni		
Crystalan	2319	S	C979888-9			G
Curast	1717	S	D9B7362-8	Fl Lo		G
Dudaka	2011		C544310-7	Lo		G
Ercan	2316		B544854-A			G
First	2414		AA7A888-A	Wa		
Fornol	1715	N	B5819CA-B	Hi	A	G
Ion	2016	W	B877755-B	Ag		G
Knabbib	2115	N	A431758-F	Ht Na Po		G
Lectorsen	1813		D554765-6	Ag	A	
Morii	2014		B62A644-A	Ni		G
N'dao	1711	S	D1007B8-9	Na Va		G
Nesdo	2213		B541231-7	Lo Po		G
Onon	2017		E576321-7	Lo		G
Ploiqu	1917	S	D422747-7	Na Po		G
Rhylea	2216		B8A6530-9	Fl Ni		G
Rib	2314		B559767-B			G
Rison	1713	N	B9D4695-B	Ni		G
Romstand	2112		C428567-9	Ni		
Seku	2312		B79A557-E	Ht Ni Wa		G
Sentark 4	2416		B755596-8	Ag Ga Ni		G
Sevan	2419	S	A544576-B	Ag Ni		
Shion	1920		D410344-8	Lo		G
Shudusham	2214		C849A55-C	Hi Ht In		G
Shushan	2211		A655435-D	Ga Ht Ni		G
Siduka	2111	N	B546689-A	Ag Ni		
Sistar	1912	N S	B430551-E	De Ht Ni Po		G
Syroe	2218	N S	B436854-D	Ht		G
Tertha	2020		C200342-B	Lo Va		G
Thass	1815		B510420-A	Ni		G
Tiwath	2012		E651575-7	Ni Po		G
Traak	1918	S	B62488C-B		A	G
Umgadin	2320		B6B5946-C	Fl Hi Ht In		G
Xalm	2220	S	D5629CA-5	Hi Lt	A	G
Yirsh Poy	2318	S	B310577-B	Ni		G



CORE

CORE SUBSECTOR



ANKOD

Reverently referred to as the 'Gateway to Capital', Ankod is a key stop on the route into the subsector from Vland and Lishun. The Imperial Navy base at Ankod has a partnership with universities on neighbouring Knabbib to develop security technology that provides a protective cordon for Capital and the subsector at large. Naval astronomers and technologists come to Ankod to work on the ultra-secret Project Shortbow at its secure training and development facilities.

Ankod is a key stop on the Annililik Run (for more on this epic event, see The Annililik Run on page 120) and has hospitality facilities for millions of visitors who come to see the thousands of racing ships en route either to or from Vland. When not providing lodging and entertainment for fans of the race, the government subsidises these facilities, using them to provide free housing for visiting traders and other Travellers. Ankod also provides complimentary refuelling for ships in the sub-1,000-ton range and a 60 percent discount for those larger than that. Ankod is a gas-giant moon and runs a fleet of skimming drones that extract hydrogen from the gas giant for processing at its refineries. This generosity is a big expense but is more than paid for by the increased trade that it brings to the system, which is near the terminus of the Sylean Main.

CAPITAL

Capital is the seat of government of the Third Imperium and home to both the Emperor – who resides at the Grand Palace of Arbellatra – and members of the peerage, who assemble at the Moot Spire.

Capital is a pleasant world with a varied climate, oceans that cover almost two thirds of its surface and a dense atmosphere of a suitable oxygen-nitrogen mix. The residents of Capital have gotten used to the density of its air over time but the atmospheric pressure at high levels of elevation are more comfortable for un-adapted humans. The world has five continents and many large islands and archipelagos. Its system primary is Zan Ki Ond, a type-G2 main sequence star, nearly identical to that of Terra in size and luminosity. However, Capital's slightly closer proximity to the star has made the world marginally hotter, giving it a large temperate zone with immense rainforests and river valleys. Its subtle 18° axial tilt results in consistent weather. The interaction of its dense atmosphere and star produces some extreme weather effects including strong inland storms and hurricanes along the coasts. Technology is used to mitigate meteorological effects to ensure a pleasant and fruitful stay for visitors to the world. Capital has two small moons, neither of which are near enough to create significant tidal forces. Despite its middling size, Capital has higher-than-expected gravity at 0.69G due to its thin mantle and larger-than-normal nickel-iron core.

The world's 20 billion inhabitants are well-distributed among its land masses and oceans, with residential arcologies located mostly in the coastal regions, but several cities are in its mountain ranges and oceans as well. Cleon's residential zones are home to 450 million people, which does not take into account the millions of visiting dignitaries, diplomats, business people and tourists who are present at any given time. Travellers may be surprised to discover that Intell is actually Capital's largest city with a total population of 562 million citizens living within its urban sprawl. The city of Intell is where Capital's primary administrative centres and light industry are located. It is often said that while the heart of Capital is Cleon, its mind is at Intell. Despite the fact that Capital has 20 billion sophonts living on its surface and orbital habitats, judicious use has been made of its available land. Large expanses of territory have been restored to their original states, including millions of hectares of jungle, open plains and mountains. Most of these regions have been inhabited at one point or another during Capital's long history but have been painstakingly returned to their original condition.

Capital was once known as Sylea and has been inhabited by humans for hundreds of thousands of years. The Syleans, a human Minor Race, were seeded on the world by the Ancients. After thousands of years of intermixing with Vilani, Solomani and other human subspecies, there are few genetically pure Syleans remaining. However, there are some Sylean populations that have preserved their genetic and cultural identities, mostly those who maintained an isolated existence in the mountain ranges of its third-largest continent. Nevertheless, one will find billions of people on Capital who claim Sylean heritage, many of whom proudly participate in cultural events, traditions and religious rituals that were practiced by their ancestors.

Capital is well defended with three full BatRons present in the system at all times. The planet is also defended by squadrons of smaller system-defence spacecraft, dozens of orbital batteries of lasers and missiles, particle weapons, ground-based aerial defences and deep-site meson guns. Capital makes more of an effort than most worlds to conceal its

CAPITAL

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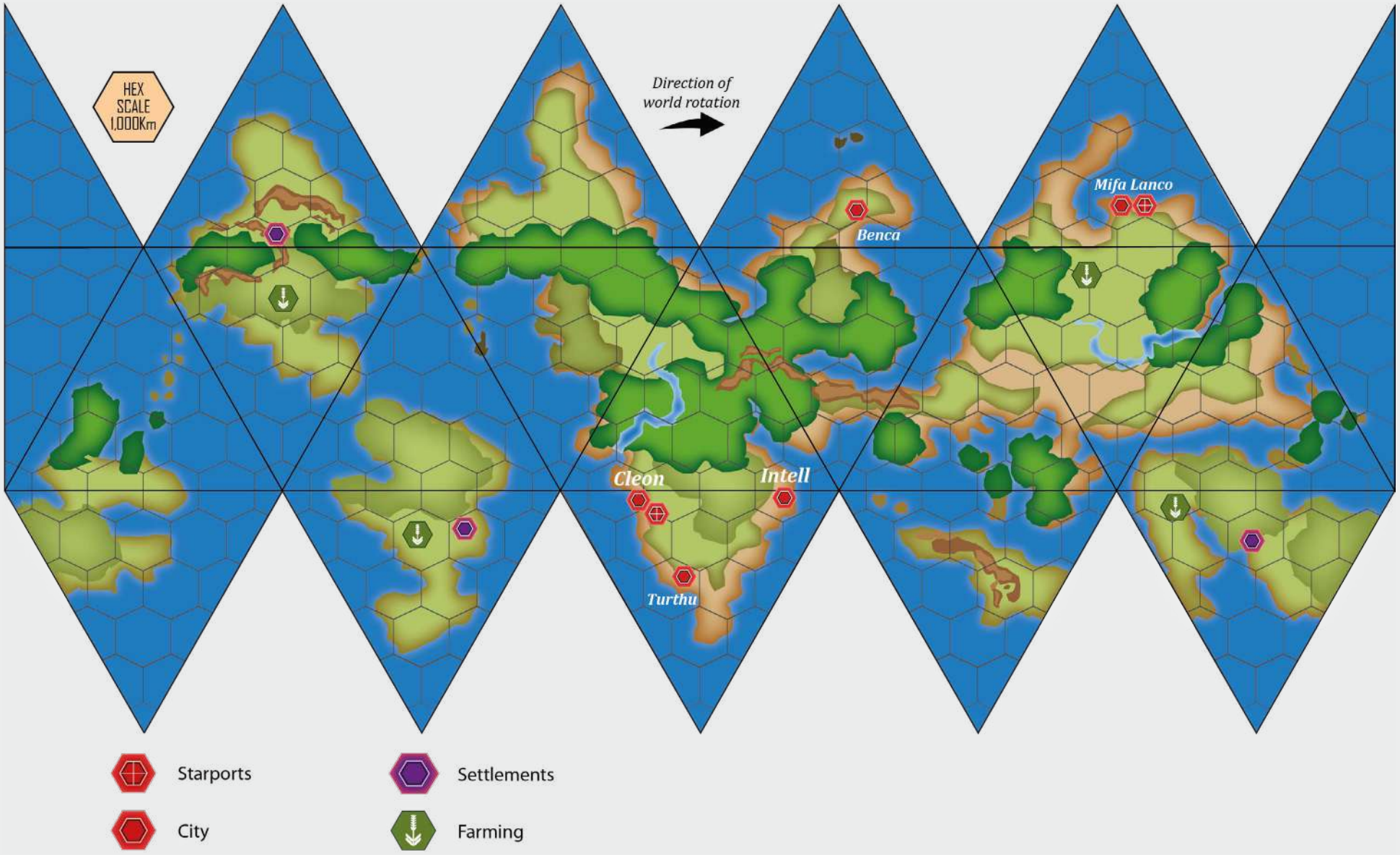


defences. While the Imperium wants its capital to be safe, it does not want to project the image that it is a militarised bunker anticipating attack.

The most popular destinations on Capital are in Cleon, where tourists go to see its many museums, shopping districts, the Grand Plaza of Heroes and the palace grounds where they can see the lofty Moot Spire, Cleon's Tomb, the Crescent Lake (where the second Imperial Palace crash landed during the Civil War) and of course the Grand Palace of Arbellatra itself and its attending structures: Paulo's Annex, Tomutov's Palace and the Trinary Consortium. Visitors of a more academic bent go to the Imperial Archives where thousands of original documents and scholarly works are on display. There are many more popular destinations throughout the world and elsewhere in the system. War history aficionados make pilgrimages to the gas giant Zhimaway where retired capital ships perform re-enactments of Arbellatra's famous battle for control of the planet.

THE GRAND PALACE OF ARBELLATRA

The Grand Palace is a grandiose structure, a tribute to the magnificence and power of the Imperium. At 39-million tons and one kilometre in diameter, the sheer enormity of the palace never ceases to amaze visitors. The palace was completed in 633 after four years of construction. It is suspended half a kilometre from the surface of Capital by a ring of gravitic suspensors emplaced below the grounds of the Imperial Park. The palace itself has backup gravitic drives within its hull but should they ever be required, they have limited power and can only keep it aloft for a short period of time before they must gently set it down.

Defences include four deep meson bays, eight particle accelerator bays, eight missile launcher bays and eight point-defence lasers. The palace is also protected with a thick layer of bonded superdense armour, nuclear dampers, meson screens and radiation shielding. To top it off, the entire structure is psionicly shielded to prevent any form of telepathic intrusion. The airspace within 100km of the palace is strictly controlled by security technicians within the palace and in subterranean control structures below the grounds. This impressive array of defences is concealed from public view. It is of the utmost importance that the seat of Imperial power not be seen as a fortified bunker. Shields and weapons – while necessary – show trepidation. The Emperor strives to convey confidence and power. The palace does all that and more.

The central shaft of the palace contains the Imperial Gardens and aquarium, each of which are approximately 400 metres deep and contain flora and fauna from places throughout the Imperium. Along the equator is a 25-metre wide promenade that encircles the entire palace sphere. The promenade has walkways, a tram and a narrow highway for small vehicles. Its inner wall is adorned with scenes from Imperial history. Speaking of history, the current Emperor has access to the Hall of Wisdom, where he may speak with artificially intelligent simulations of all previous Emperors.

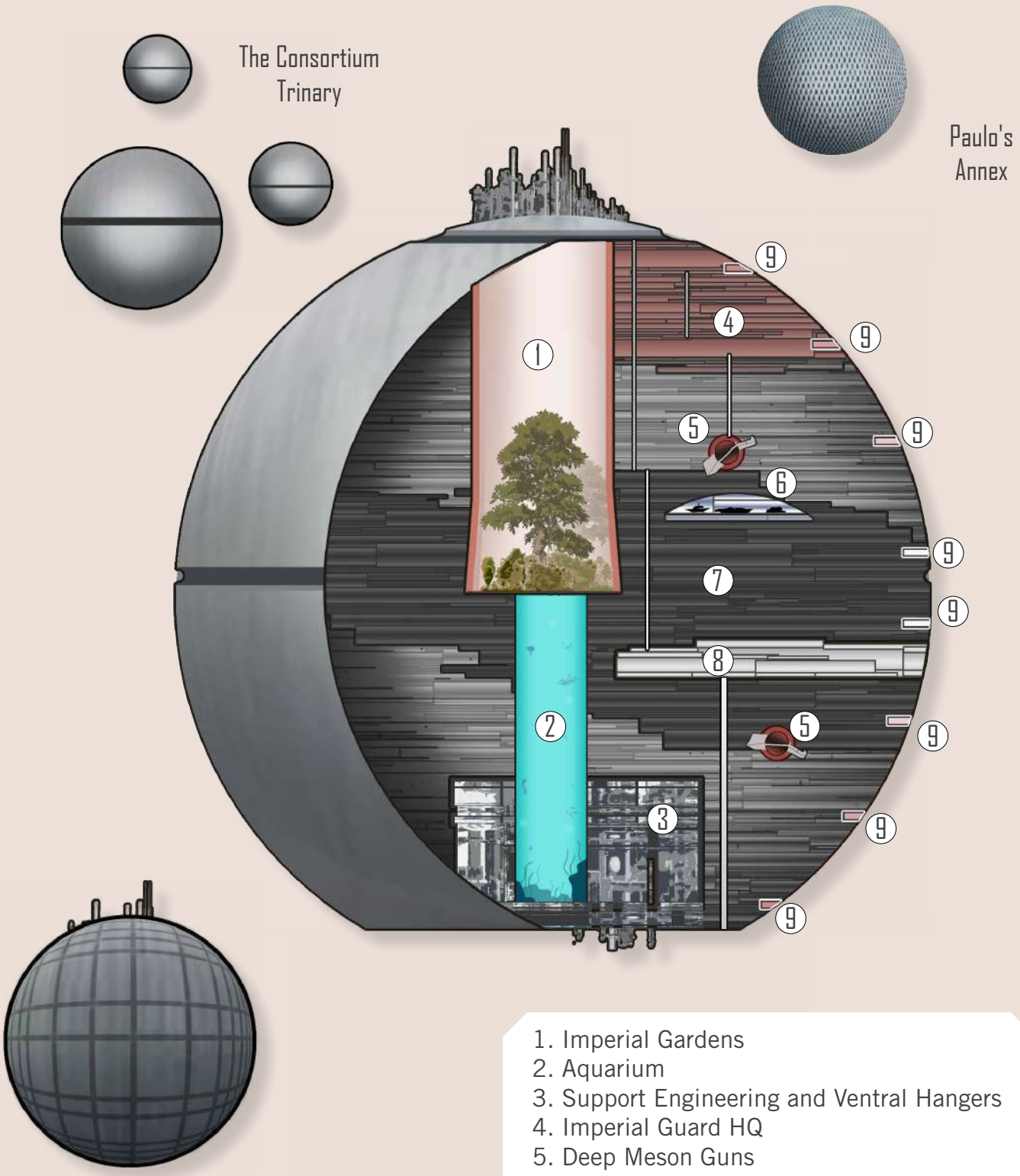
The throne room of the Grand Palace is a spacious octagonal room that is adjacent to the Imperial Residence. The Emperor entertains his most esteemed visitors in this room. The hallowed Iridium Throne was built by Cleon Zhunastu himself and is one of the few surviving artefacts from the first palace.

The Grand Palace of Arbellatra is attended by several smaller floating gravitic structures, including the following: the Consortium Trinary, which is a trio of small spheres, each of which contains a museum with exhibits dedicated to the three Imperiums; Paulo's Annex, a pleasure palace that contains all sorts of entertainments and is often used for sporting events; and Tomutov's Palace, which is used to house esteemed guests of the Emperor.

ONON

Onon is an inhospitable world originally settled by the Vilani over 5,000 years ago. Among the planet's many imposing features are high winds of over 350 kilometres per hour, acid rain and poisonous gas clouds emitted from porous and cracked volcanic plains. The final straw for the colony may have come when a violent shifting of the world's tectonic plates massively increased the volcanism. So much volcanic effluvium was emitted into the atmosphere that Onon was concealed in worldwide dust-cloud cover for over two centuries. Onon has ample resources but ultimately proved to be too challenging an environment to sustain a long-term settlement. The only colonists who remained were belters who settled the system's two planetoid belts. The belts were never especially rich and were eventually tapped of what valuable metals they had.

GRAND PALACE OF ARBELLATRA



1. Imperial Gardens
2. Aquarium
3. Support Engineering and Ventral Hangers
4. Imperial Guard HQ
5. Deep Meson Guns
6. Small Craft Hangar
7. Imperial Residences
8. Grand Promenade
9. External Weapons Bays

Today, Onon is a lonely and desolate system with only a few thousand permanent inhabitants. The world receives few visitors other than an occasional team of geological researchers. While not technically an Imperial Reserve, the Emperor does use it as a solemn refuge from time-to-time in order to get away from the stresses of managing an empire. Much of the world's infrastructure has fallen into ruin and is being reclaimed by native flora and the elements. The major Imperial retreat is the central palace and surrounding government buildings, poised on a sheer cliff overlooking a scum-choked sea; much of the surrounding city is also in ruin. An obsidian fortress has been built for the Emperor on one of Onon's mid-size mountains, overlooking a wide basalt plain. Its stark vistas and noxious black cloud cover make it an excellent place for brooding and deep contemplation.

RHYLEA

Rhylea has a hybrid hydrogen-chloride/carbon dioxide atmosphere with trace oxygen. The world does not have much in the way of complex life forms but does have abundant microbial species and several hundred types of oceanic algae, coastal lichens and low-lying shrubbery, which have been catalogued by naturalists who explored the world in hostile environment suits. Like most F-type stars, Rhylea's primary simply will not have a long enough lifespan for the world to evolve a broader range of flora and fauna.

The world was barren until a few centuries ago when Sylean colonists built a cultural and religious refuge there. The name of the world means 'new home'. The colony is governed by a council of priests, philosophers and academics and has no law to speak of. While the facilities are intended for people of Sylean heritage, non-Syleans are not forbidden from coming. However, visitors are expected to adopt the dress, customs and language of ancient Sylea. The official language is Old Sylean and speaking Galanglic, Vilani and other languages is discouraged. Monks at the temple will teach visitors the language provided they prove their heritage is at least 75 percent Sylean.

The domes and other structures of the colony are deliberately mid-tech but are ornate, well-designed and have been built with high-quality materials. Sylean culture emphasises prosperity and the acquisition of wealth and it appears that the Rhylean colony has well-heeled benefactors.

Residents and visitors alike are allowed to explore the exotic environment of the planet, which they often do. Vehicles are provided by the colony but many people opt to simply don an environment suit and go for a hike. The chlorine in the atmosphere gives it a fumy green colour and visibility is limited. The colony has begun to keep close tabs on explorers with tracking and communications devices after a few expeditions were lost in the world's murky mountain ranges.

SHUDUSHAM

A water world with only a few small land masses, Shudusham has been inhabited for thousands of years dating back to the early expansion period of the First Imperium. The world, which the Vilani called Lauursha, was isolated during the Long Night. Shudusham is rich in natural resources but presents a challenging environment that requires reasonably high technology to survive. When the flow of interstellar trade abruptly came to a halt, many of the world's thousands of undersea arcologies floundered and died. Small groups of cities and in many cases individual arcologies became isolated city states. Radio contact was retained and used by oceangoing ships and submarines but linguistic drift divided the arcology nations even further.

After being contacted by Sylean scouts, the Lauurshans eagerly accepted technological aid and gradually climbed back up the technological ladder, eventually surpassing their pre-Long Night level. After recontact, the locals adopted Galanglic as their primary language but even today, people from many of the extant arcologies speak a local dialect as a second language. Lauursha changed its name to Shudusham, referencing a resurrection story from Vilani lore often likened to the story of the phoenix from ancient Terran mythology. Shudushami resources and industrial output are given a great deal of credit for fuelling the rise of the Sylean Federation and its successor, the Third Imperium.

For over 700 years, Shudusham has been the site of the famous Shudusham Robotics Conference. Held once every 10 years, this year-long conference attracts academics and technologists from throughout the Core sector and beyond. New discoveries, product demonstrations and thousands of panels are held during the year-long event. Shudusham was selected to host the event due to its historical significance. About a century before the founding of the Third Imperium, terrorists used armed robots to destroy a Sylean warship at Fornol. Shortly thereafter, Shudusham hosted the Shudusham Robotics Concords, which set strict limitations on the use of robots.

SYROE

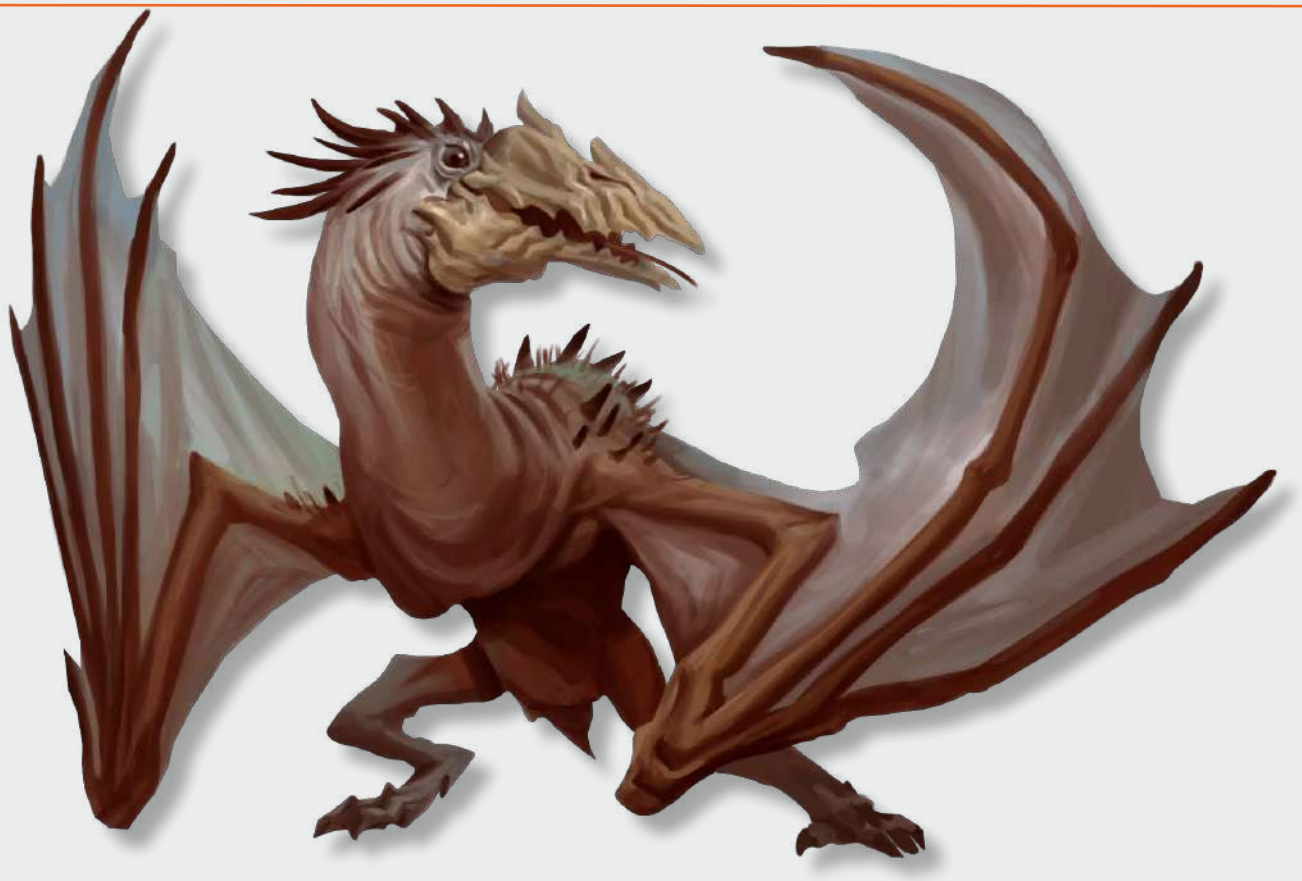
Syroe was on the edge of ecological disaster until Emperor Martin II intervened in the mid-230s. Syroe, then called Shaaak, was overpopulated and governed by an agency that sought to develop its resources as fully as it could with little regard for the environmental damage it was causing. Its industrial concerns were producing toxic atmospheric taints, which threatened the lives of its inhabitants. In addition, careless development projects had done a great deal of damage to the world's surface by speeding up the erosion of delicate coastal land masses. Martin could not stomach having such a collapse occur right on Capital's doorstep. He initiated a deindustrialisation and emigration program that sought to reverse the seemingly inevitable disaster and relocate millions of its most endangered citizens to the previously undeveloped worlds of Ase, Uunli (now Umgadin) and Khishnar (now Xalm).

It was a colossal undertaking that took decades to complete. Using disposable one-shot and two-shot jump drives, the Shaaaki were transported to their new homes where they built three new societies, two of that – Ase and Umgadin – have become industrial powerhouses. Each had rich planetoid belts which were mined for the materials they needed to build their societies. Things have not gone quite as well on Xalm, which is in environmental freefall but Imperial aid has been provided in an attempt to reverse its decline.

Syroe is a small, low-gravity world with three continents and highly unusual geography. Most of the accessible land on the world is in the form of high plateaus surrounded by sharp, craggy mountain ranges at the coasts that appear to jut upwards from the sea like daggers. At the centre of each continent is a massive caldera, each of which was active approximately a million years ago but all of which are dormant now. The largest of the continents actually has two overlapping calderas but the oldest of the two seems to have gone dormant many millions of years before the other. Natural erosion has cut sharp crevices and canyons into the plateaus, carving them up with deep river valleys and canyons some of which descend below sea level where the atmosphere is considerably denser, nearly reaching a thin classification. In its oceans, Syroe has two enormous atolls created by additional calderas but which failed to reach above the surface of the water. One of the two is still active and has been bubbling a sulphurous spume to the surface for centuries but it has not violently erupted for hundreds of thousands of years.

The placid, stable K-type primary star of the system is old and the planet has had billions of years to develop a complex array of life forms. Its distant red dwarf companion is too remote to have a noticeable effect on the system mainworld. Imperial Navy and Scout bases have been present on Syroe since the early 300s. Emperor Anguistus endowed the world with a multi-billion Credit grant, which was used to terraform it back into a more pristine state, a project which was completed in the early 600s and has been in maintenance mode ever since.

The syroc is an aerial reptiloid predator that hunts small- to mid-sized creatures on the surface of Syroe. An adult syroc measures approximately one and a half metres from head to tail and its leathery wings span from three to four metres, ending in sharp talons. Males and females use their talons for different purposes. Males use them to establish mating privileges and females to crack open hard-shelled or skinned prey for their young to eat and to ward off males when they are not ovulating. Syrocs are graceful and precise flyers and are often seen in flocks of two to five, slicing their way through Syroe's canyons. The air above the canyons is too thin to support their flight capabilities so they are rarely seen on the plateaus. However, they are occasionally found on the edge of an escarpment, hopping along and looking for small prey.



Animal	Hits	Speed
Syroc	14	12m
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 2, Stealth 1	
Attacks	Claws (D3), Bite (1D)	
Traits	Armour (+4), Heightened Senses, Small (-1)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter	

TIWATH

Tiwath is a tidally locked circumbinary planet that absorbs regular, almost rhythmic stellar flares from one of the two red dwarf stars that it orbits. The flares, which occur every 15–18 years, cause immense fires in the twilight band, virtually levelling its forests and evaporating seas and marshlands. Without fail, this event is followed by an upwelling of convection currents that carry nutrients from the dark side of the planet to replenish the scorched lands. New trees, foliage and animal life grow at a miraculous rate and are typically restored within one to two years.

The people of Tiwath have adapted to this cycle of creative destruction, moving to deep subterranean hovels during the flares and taking with them a bounty of agricultural products grown during the fertile years between each cycle. They carefully monitor the progress of the flares while underground and return to the surface when they are over. The return to the surface is marked by glorious festivals followed by the building of new habitations and the planting of new crops. Tiwathans are avid naturalists and enjoy hiking into their marshes and forests to watch the wildlife re-emerge from its dormant state.

Every few centuries, the flare cycle has a ‘hiccup’ of sorts in which the star breaks its rhythm, producing shorter or longer flare-and-growth cycles. This presents enormous challenges for the Tiwathans who gauge the cycles as precisely as possible. The Imperium routinely offers assistance during these challenging periods but has been unequivocally rebuffed thus far. The Tiwathans see themselves as the blessed custodians of their world and feel they must take the bad with the good, even when it means risking their very survival.

KASKII

The Kaskii subsector has a low stellar density but a surprisingly high population. With only 24 star systems – the fewest in all of the Core – it is home to the second-highest number of people in the sector, second only to Saregon. Of Kaskii's seven high-population worlds, three are classified as industrial. Of these, Kaskii and Khuir are models of efficiency; the other, Markasher, is plagued with problems that prevent it from becoming one.

Most worlds in the subsector were barely populated when the Third Imperium was established. It was a barren and desolate place with only a few struggling remnant populations that were left over from the Long Night. There were two reasons why this changed as rapidly as it did. The first was the betrayal of the Wayward Worlds. When 10 systems from the original Sylean Federation refused to join the fledgling Third Imperium, the Syleans expanded their presence to trailing of Capital. The second was the desire of the Syleans to build a cultural legacy, which they felt they could only do if there were significantly more Syleans and more worlds on which they had an enduring presence. While they were instrumental in the founding of the Imperium, the Syleans were a tiny minority at its outset. They embarked upon an aggressive population expansion project, the fruit of which may be seen in the Kaskii subsector today. Sylean families were encouraged to be fruitful and multiply, which they did with great alacrity, so much so that there are now over 48 billion Syleans in the subsector.

The Sylean Worlds are thought to be like any other Imperial worlds until one visits them. Travellers often note that when they make the jump into the worlds of the cultural zone, they feel as if they have left the Imperium for a foreign polity. Others say that it is more like going through a time warp, either to a distant past when technology was not so prevalent or to a utopian future, in which there is no military presence. The cultural zone does in fact have many high-tech worlds but the Syleans are understated when it comes to technology. A key tenet of their culture is that technology is best when it is seamlessly integrated into things. Flashy tech takes away from more important things in life like quiet contemplation, religious worship, industriousness and family. Despite the Syleans being devoted to the Imperium as much as anyone else, one rarely sees the Imperial Sunburst or similar iconography within its borders. What one does see is a devotion to culture. The art, architecture, religions, style of dress and dominant philosophies of the Sylean Worlds are distinctly different than those seen outside the boundaries of the cultural region. Within these borders, the Syleans are allowed to be Syleans.

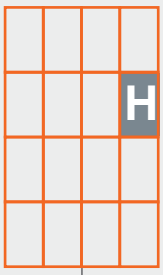
There are no navy or scout bases within its borders, except on two worlds: Capital and Yirsh Poy, both of which are in the Core subsector. The defence of the cultural region is left to external star systems along its borders. It was not always this way. The Sylean Worlds were as heavily militarised as any other Imperial world up until the end of the Civil War. The Emperors of the Flag made the Core and Kaskii subsectors their own private war zone. The Sylean

leaders allowed the Moot to declare the region an autonomous state in order to prevent the war from spreading to the rest of the Imperium. After the war ended and Arbellatra was declared Regent, the leadership of the Sylean Worlds held a conference on Khuir, where they decided as a group that they would never be used in such a way again. Sylea, they declared, was instrumental in the formation of the Imperium and it had been equally important for its preservation. From then on, it would become a place of peace.

Because of the demilitarisation of the cultural zone, Kaskii has few military bases. There is only one scout base and three navy bases. The Imperial Navy's 4th Fleet is concentrated on few worlds but has an active presence in the subsector. Its personnel are by regulation over three quarters Sylean and each of its ships are given traditional Sylean names above the banner of Kaskii, a trio of three crimson Imperial sunbursts. The sunbursts represent 'The Belt of Cleon,' a constellation of red giants visible just to coreward, the stars of the Uungip, Kuuir Am and Kishkeiim systems.

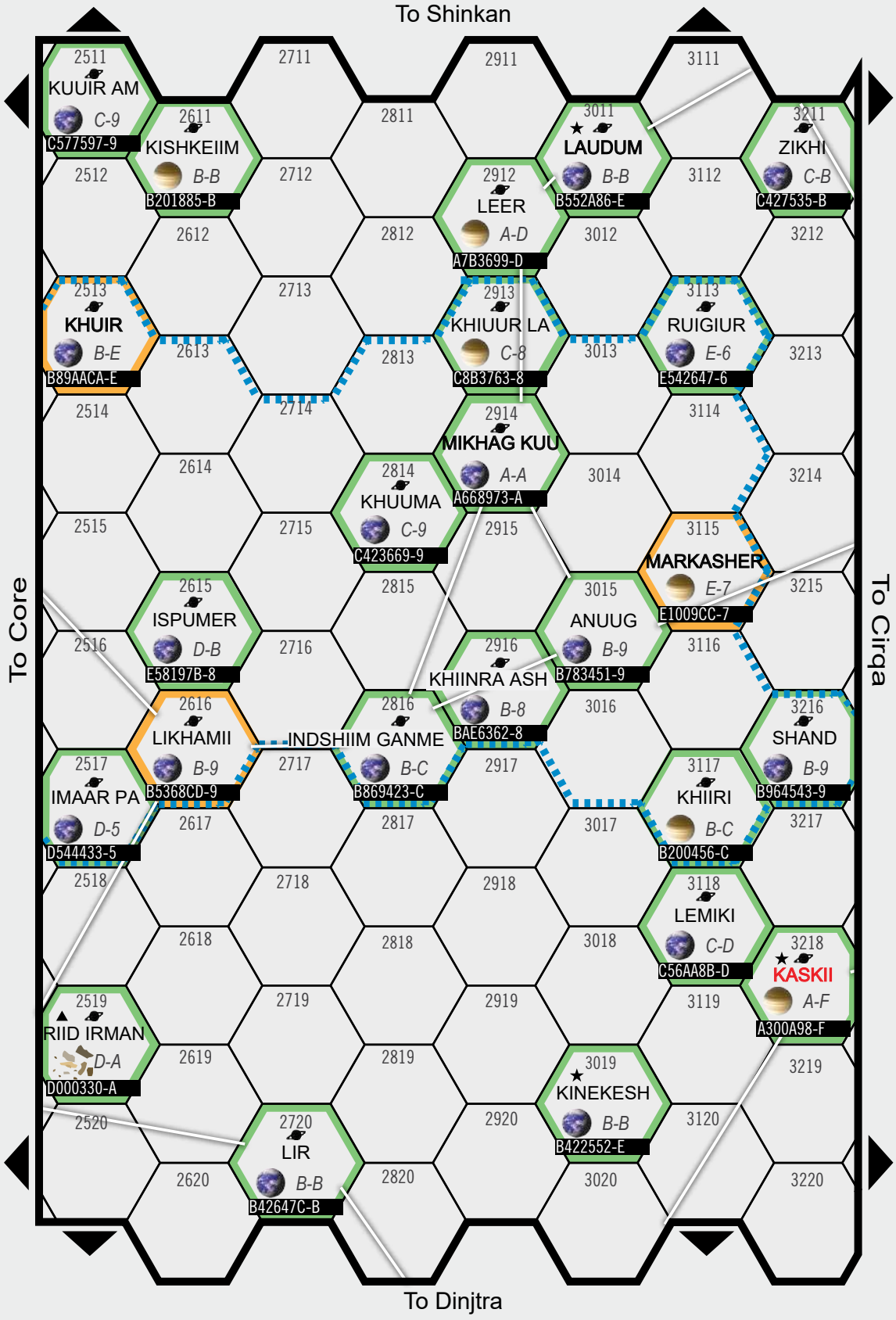
The jury is still out on the Kaskii experiment. While the Syleans certainly demonstrated they could tame a barren wasteland, make its worlds prosperous and whole, and populate them, there is still the question of what they were trying to prove and to whom. The Wayward Worlds have long since been annexed and with the expansion of the Imperium to 11,000 worlds, the Syleans remain a relatively tiny minority. The debate rages on among historians. While some dismiss the Sylean Worlds as a civilisation borne from a fit of pique, others applaud them for expanding their presence, thereby ensuring their place in history.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Anuug	3015		B783451-9	Ni		
Imaar Pa	2517		D544433-5	Lt Ni		G
Indshiim Ganme	2816		B869423-C	Ht Ni		G
Ispumer	2615		E58197B-8	Hi		G
Kaskii	3218	N	A300A98-F	Hi Ht In Na Va		G
Khiinra Ash	2916		BAE6362-8	Lo		G
Khiiri	3117		B200456-C	Ht Ni Va		G
Khiuur La	2913		C8B3763-8	Fl		G
Khuir	2513		B89AACA-E	Hi Ht In Wa	A	G
Khuuma	2814		C423669-9	Na Ni Po		G
Kinekesh	3019	N	B422552-E	Ht Ni Po		
Kishkeiim	2611		B201885-B	Ht Ic Na Va		G
Kuuir Am	2511		C577597-9	Ag Ni		G
Laudum	3011	N	B552A86-E	Hi Ht Po		G
Leer	2912		A7B3699-D	Fl Ht Ni		G
Lemiki	3118		C56AA8B-D	Hi Ht Wa		G
Likhamii	2616		B5368CD-9	Ht	A	G
Lir	2720		B42647C-B	Ni		G
Markasher	3115		E1009CC-7	Hi In Na Va	A	
Mikhag Kuu	2914		A668973-A	Hi		G
Riid Irman	2519	S	D000330-A	As Lo Va		G
Ruigiur	3113		E542647-6	Ni Po		G
Shand	3216		B964543-9	Ag Ni		G
Zikhi	3211		C427535-B	Ni		G



CORE

KASKII SUBSECTOR



THE CHASMATA SYLEA

Kaskii has two stellar chasms, one to coreward that averages three parsecs in width and another to rimward that runs four to six parsecs wide. The two are collectively known as the Chasmata Sylea; the smaller called Chasma Sylea Minor and the larger Chasma Sylea Major. In frontier sectors, such as the Spinward Marches, stellar voids like these are simply seen as an impediment, an inconvenient absence of stars that one must circumnavigate. In sectors like the Core, these regions present a threat to the security of the empire.

In 1056, Solomani supremacists built a secret deep-space outpost one parsec from the Riid Irman system. The Solomani had acquired several large planetoids from the Riid Irman belt and took them into the Chasma Sylea Major using disposable jump drives. They intended to accelerate the planetoids to near-relativistic speeds to impact on Sevan, thereby destroying the world. While the Solomani did everything they could to maintain the secrecy of their mission, Imperial Naval Intelligence agents intercepted them in the Shashuua system and prevented the catastrophic event from happening. The Imperium had long feared that terrorists or insurgent organisations might try something like this, perhaps with Capital itself as the target. The event resulted in the immediate funding of Project Shortbow, which is intended to prevent an attack like this from happening.

Because of the threat to security that the Chasmata present, these deep-space regions and others like them are regularly patrolled by the Imperial Navy and Scout Service. The Imperium has placed dozens of refuelling caches and space stations in many of the empty parsecs of the Chasmata, although their exact location is a state secret. Travelling into stellar voids is tricky business. Jump technology relies on the presence of large gravity wells that are used by astrogators to plot their courses; these are obviously lacking in deep space. Generally speaking, if one wants to actually find an object that has been planted in the empty depths of space, it must be equipped with a communications device that broadcasts its location, lest it be lost. For this reason, bases emplaced in the Chasmata are equipped with sophisticated equipment that makes them easy to find if one knows where to look.

The methods used to patrol the chasms are not perfect but until Project Shortbow goes online, they will have to do. Along with the diligent work of the Imperial intelligence agencies, they have thus far averted a major catastrophe from taking place. Meanwhile, the Imperial Navy has catalogued thousands of deep space objects within the Chasmata, the locations of which are classified.

INDSHIIM GANME

When looking at the Core sector, one of its notable features is a complete lack of Red Zone worlds. A Red Zone designation indicates that a world or even entire star system has been interdicted for some reason. The Core certainly had its share of Red Zone-worthy worlds at one time but thousands of years of settlement, terraforming and adaptation has changed that. Indshiim Ganme was once one of its Red Zone worlds.

A look at its basic features reveals nothing out of the ordinary. Indshiim Ganme is roughly Earth-like in size and atmospheric composition. The majority of its surface is covered in water and it has only two small continents and thousands of islands scattered over its surface. Its primary star is a placid yellow dwarf, slightly smaller and cooler than Sol. Despite its seeming habitability, Indshiim Ganme suffers from a number of unusual characteristics that make it an extremely challenging environment.

Indshiim Ganme is blanketed by nearly constant storms with winds that reach up to 1,200 kilometres per hour, scouring its land masses of all but a few hardy life forms. The primary factors are its axial tilt of 52°, rotation period of only six hours and proximity to its star. The high rotation rate creates a strong Coriolis effect and dozens of Hadley cells that cause extreme weather effects. In addition, the world is on the inward portion of the habitable zone, subjecting it to a high level of stellar radiation, which accelerates its winds. Its atmosphere, magnetic field and other factors are

suitable to support life but the added stellar energy exacerbates the world's meteorological conditions, making it difficult for land-based life to exist.

This extreme environment was enough to deter colonists from settling the planet during the era of the Ziru Sirka. Solomani settlers also passed it by during the Rule of Man, opting only to install a space station in its L4 Lagrange point to serve as a stopover between the Likhamii, Ispumer and Khiinra Ash systems. Only in the era of the Third Imperium has there been an effort to explore the world. In 856, a Sylean expedition out of Khuir built a space elevator to the surface of the planet. The primary cable was built with bonded superdense alloys, making it strong enough to endure the harsh weather. The exorbitantly expensive project was a gamble but one which would pay off if they were able to find and extract resources from this potentially rich world.

The windswept surface of Indshiim Ganme revealed little in the way of valuable resources but surveys of its oceans made startling discoveries. The world is host to a plethora of advanced life forms, all of which live just beneath the surface of the water. The most advanced of these are an intelligent species of filter/scavengers that inhabit depths of 20–100 metres and appear to have achieved approximately TL1–2. The Syleans have named them the Ganmeids. Most of their structures were built in cavern systems on escarpments and sea mounts that shielded them from discovery by orbital probes. An IISS exploration team was brought in to examine the species but contact has not yet been made. The expedition eventually became a colony based at the refurbished Rule of Man-era space station. No permanent habitations have been established on the surface of the planet, nor in its waters, but some resource extraction has occurred. The Scout Service has petitioned the Syleans to have the world interdicted but no final decision has yet been made.

Ganmeids are a roughly human-sized water-breathing species that survive by filtering nutrients from the turbulent waters near the surface of their oceans and consuming the carcasses of dead animals found in the shallows near the coasts and on sea mounts. They communicate by emitting high-pitched sounds when at a distance but typically resort to hand signals and other forms of non-verbal communication when within a few metres of each other.

Alien	Hits	Speed
Ganmeid	24	12m (aquatic)
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Melee (natural) 1, Recon 1, Survival 2	
Attacks	Bite (1D+3)	
Traits	Aquatic, Armour (+4), Camouflaged, Echolocation, Heightened Senses	
Behaviour	Filter, Scavenger	

EXPEDITIONARY CRAWLER

This hardy tracked vehicle is custom designed to travel on worlds like Indshiim Ganme. Its treads are spiked in order to grip the ground and when stopped, it bores into the ground with an array of anchors to prevent it from being thrown about by high winds. The crawler is armoured and structurally reinforced to protect it from windborne projectiles. Accommodations are cramped but there is enough room for the crew to move around. Bunks, a fresher and a mini-galley are installed for extended expeditions. The crawler is segmented into three small compartments that enable it to navigate crevasses and deep inclines. The rear compartment is designed to hang at an angle of up to 90° in order to deposit its mini-submarine into the ocean over the edge of an escarpment or other angled surface.

TL	12
SKILL	Drive (tracked)
AGILITY	+1
SPEED (CRUISE)	Very Slow (Idle)
RANGE (CRUISE)	100 years
CREW	1
PASSENGERS	4
CARGO	250kg
HULL	158
SHIPPING	24 tons
COST	MCr12.75

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Autopilot (advanced), Bunks x6, Communications System (advanced, satellite uplink), Computer/3, Fire Extinguishers, Fresher, Fusion Plant (advanced), General Purpose Laboratory, Hostile Environment Protection, Internal Bay (5 tons), Life Support (long term), Manipulator Arm (advanced), Mini-galley, Navigation System (improved), Sensors (improved).

TRAITS

AFV, Tracked

ARMOUR

FRONT	24	REAR	24	SIDES	24

EQUIPMENT

Autopilot (skill level)	3
Communications (range)	1,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1
Camouflage (Recon DM)	—
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—

EXPLORER MINI-SUB

The Explorer mini-sub is designed to fit into the rear compartment of the expeditionary crawler, which deposits it into the ocean via a deployment ramp/recovery deck. This nifty little submersible is camouflaged to avoid detection by the local sophonts. The holding tank can contain up to 250 kilograms of biomatter, mineral samples or whatever else the crew scoops out of the ocean with the manipulator arm.

TL	12
SKILL	Seafarer (submarine)
AGILITY	+1
SPEED (CRUISE)	Slow (Very Slow)
RANGE (CRUISE)	200 (300)
CREW	1
PASSENGERS	1
CARGO	—
HULL	30
SHIPPING	10 tons
COST	Cr559950

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

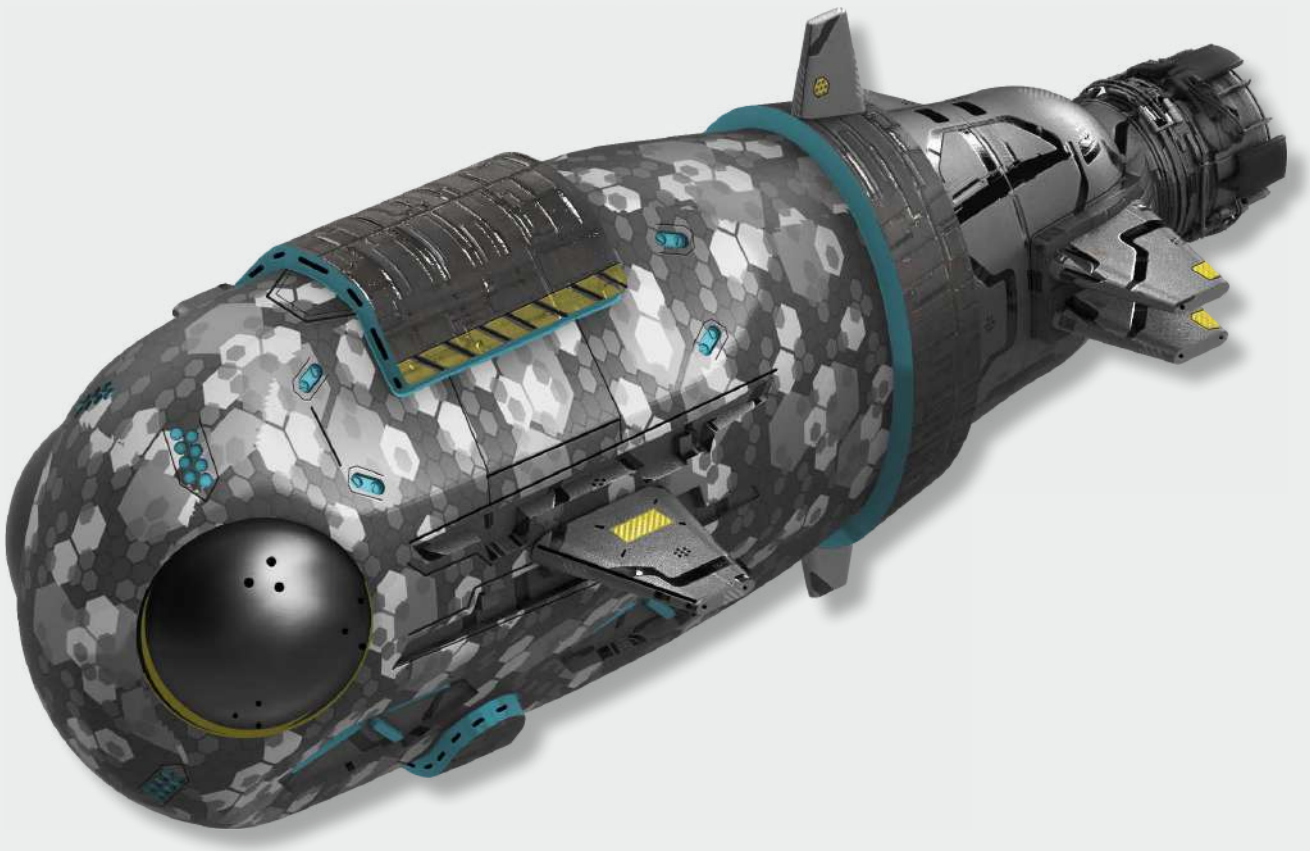
Autopilot (advanced), Communications System (advanced), Computer/3, Fire Extinguishers, Holding Tank (1 space), Hydrographic Sampler, Navigation System (improved), Sensors (improved, underwater).

ARMOUR

FRONT	4	REAR	4	SIDES	4

EQUIPMENT

Autopilot (skill level)	0
Communications (range)	1,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-4
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—



KHIINRA ASH

Khiinra Ash is a moon of a circumbinary gas giant called Khamikurde Anku, which orbits the system's pair of red dwarf stars. The two stars have similar mass and they orbit one another closely. The larger of the two accretes a small amount of mass from the smaller, making them what is known as a semidetached binary pair.

Khiinra Ash is a massive moon with a diameter of nearly 17,000 kilometres and a gravity of 1.9G. It orbits its gas giant once every 63 hours, exposing both of its hemispheres to the twin stars of the system, thereby giving it some semblance of a day-night cycle. The moon has liquid water oceans, two massive continents and several hundred islands, some of which are arranged in long, winding archipelagos. Because of its high gravity, Khiinra Ash has no large mountain ranges to speak of but its porous, cracked land masses have enormous canyon systems, some of which are over 100km in depth. The atmosphere on the surface is trace but a thin oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere may be found deep in the canyons. Not surprisingly, this is also where its complex land-based life resides. Khiinra Ash is an unlikely candidate to harbour life and yet it has a teeming biosphere.

At the apex of the world's life forms are the Bhu'oovaakaylaa, an immense species that defies strict definition. The species has two sexes, each of which weigh about four tons with females slightly larger than males. They bear live young, usually in litters of two or three, which are immediately mobile upon birth. Bhu'oovaakaylaa have a thick, elongated body with rear flippers for swimming, an armoured carapace on their dorsal surface like that of a crustacean, two dextrous appendages that end in three fingers with an opposable thumb and a head-like structure at the front. The head has four eyes that wrap most of the way around it to provide 270° vision. The species is omnivorous with a large mouth that contains a dozen large molar-like teeth to masticate plant food and sharp incisors in the front to bite off chunks of meat from animals. The Bhu'oovaakaylaa have an internal bladder with which they extract gaseous elements from the atmosphere for various purposes. When filled, the bladder enables them to float short distances.

The Bhu'oovaakaylaa are classified as a Minor Race with human-level intelligence. They are currently at approximately TL2 with some tool manufacturing that extend to TL3. They are by and large a friendly species and were initially contacted by Vilani scouts thousands of years ago. The worldwide population of the Bhu'oovaakaylaa is difficult to determine but the Scout Services estimates that there are probably about 12 million of them. The listed population figure for the world represents only the humans present.

Alien	Hits	Speed
Bhu'oovaakaylaa	70	6m (aquatic), 4m (flight)
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Flyer (natural) 2, Melee (natural) 1, Recon 2, Survival 1	
Attacks	Bite (2D)	
Traits	Amphibious, Armour (+2), Heightened Senses, Large (+2)	
Behaviour	Omnivore	

While it is not classified as such, Khiinra Ash is effectively a reserve, with few humans living permanently on its surface. The high gravity makes it uncomfortable for humans but the Bhu'oovaakaylaa welcome expeditions when they come. When offered Red Zone status, they declined. They are a philosophical species and while few have ever left the planet – due to their size and highly specified adaptations – they welcome the idea that they are members of an interstellar community. The Bhu'oovaakaylaa enjoy speaking with visitors of all races, learning more about them and engaging in spirited debates. They speak in deep bellows and communication with them is loud and ponderous. They are a long-lived species, with an average lifespan of over 300 years and they seem to be in no hurry to rush through a conversation.

Khiinra Ash Highport is a serviceable and friendly facility but its technology is outdated. The staff see themselves as ambassadors to the Bhu'oovaakaylaa civilisation and are helpful to offworlders, for whom they maintain a selection of high-G apparatuses and exoskeletons to make wandering the surface of Khiinra Ash more comfortable.

MARKASHER

The mainworld of the Markasher system is not a planet at all but simply one of the larger planetoids of its two belts, Markasher α (the inner belt) and Markasher β (the outer belt). This 'world' is fortuitously located in a less dense region between the two belts where collisions are rare. Most of the system's actual terrestrial planets are far into the outer zone of the system's orange giant star, Kalyptus. This star is well on its way along the red giant branch and will one day swell to enormous size, consuming both belts. Fortunately for Markasher's residents, this will not occur for many millions of years. The system has no gas giants so there are no ready sources for wilderness refuelling.

Markasher's rich belts have been exploited for centuries by the Conglomerate, a collection of mostly Sylean mining concerns whose leadership positions are passed on hereditarily or by the appointment of the previous owner. Markasheri mining 'clans' work in concert to extract the resources from the belts that are needed to build infrastructure for the high-population worlds of the Kashii subsector. Thousands of hollowed-out planetoids contain a variety of habitats, few of which have artificial gravity. In most cases, these planetoids have been given spin to simulate gravity but in others the belters live in low- or zero-G environments for their entire lives, which has an adverse effect on their health. Most of their maladies – muscle atrophy and osteoporosis, to name a few – can be treated with exercise, intervals spent in higher G and modern medicine but the austere Conglomerate does little to provide treatment. Aid groups from Mikhag Kuu have come to the system to purchase abandoned planetoid habitations, which they intend to outfit with artificial gravity so they can be used to provide 'regeneration intervals' for the Markasheri. The self-reliant government is not pleased with this development, as it could create unrest among the masses who might start to demand such services.

Inhabited planetoids are fitted with surveillance equipment that closely monitors the activities of Markasheri citizens, although allegedly this is only present to monitor the traffic of sublight mining barges and other spacecraft. Abnormalities in traffic and the movement of mineral payloads are watched closely to prevent claim jumping and smuggling. Markasher has an extremely high Law Level and a low tolerance for criminal behaviour. Relatively minor infractions have been known to result in one-way trips out of an airlock without the benefit of a vacc suit.

Markasher system has a soft interdiction in place. While Travellers are not forbidden to pass through the system, there is no official starport and no refuelling services to speak of. Any fuel present is owned by individual clans, who use it to operate sublight spacecraft. Visitors who enter the Markasher system without making arrangements ahead of time have no place to go. Unscheduled visitors have been known to sit in docking queues for weeks before being allowed to park their ships at one of the system's rudimentary spaceports. Stranded craft sometimes resort to 'ice cracking', finding a planetoid with frozen water, breaking it down and refining it for hydrogen fuel. This practice is forbidden and violators can expect anything from an extremely stiff fine to incarceration on a zero-G planetoid or, in extreme cases, ejection from an airlock.

CREATING SYLEAN TRAVELLERS

Syleans are a human Minor Race, created by the Ancients who took a sample of the hominid predecessors of *homo sapiens* from Terra and seeded them on Sylea. The differences between Sylean humans and other subspecies are subtle and it is unclear whether the Ancients subjected them to any form of genetic engineering. Syleans are physically similar to Solomani humans with some minor differences. They are slightly taller with an average height of almost two metres. Their skin is very light, nearly white in some cases, while their hair colour is almost universally dark brown to black, creating a stunning contrast. Sylean eye colour tends to the extremes from an almost crystalline grey or blue to a deep dark brown, appearing almost black.

The primary differences between Syleans and other human subspecies are not physical but cultural. Syleans are a focused and driven race, guided by a long history of oppression at the hands of Vilani and Solomani invaders. While most are now of mixed heritage, having bred with Vilani and Solomani humans, there are still billions of genetically pure Syleans due to the fact that many were isolated in remote reservations on their homeworld deep into the Long Night and maintained their purity even after leaving Sylea for other star systems.

The Syleans are a spiritual and philosophical people. The introduction of interstellar travel and high technology has not disconnected them from religious practices, meditation, spiritual contemplation or any number of other pursuits that have disappeared from the lives of many of their human brethren.

CHARACTERISTICS

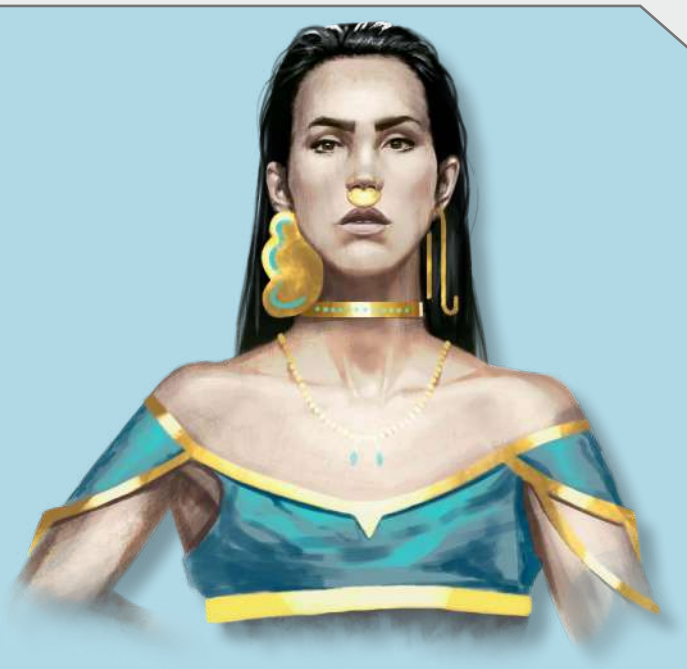
Sylean Travellers have the following modifiers applied to their characteristics: STR-1 and EDU+1.

TRAITS

Cooperation: Syleans are exceptionally cooperative with others of their species. When on a Sylean World (one with a Sylean population of 50 percent or more), Sylean Travellers receive DM+2 on Admin, Diplomat and Streetwise checks. This reflects the Syleans' innate ability to close ranks and cooperate with one another to achieve a desired goal.

CAREERS

Almost all of the careers listed in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* are suitable for Sylean Travellers but the Drifter and Rogue careers require additional explanation.



For the Drifter career, Sylean barbarians and wanderers should be exceedingly rare. The Sylean Worlds are old and well-developed, and there are few low-tech worlds to be found. However, a Sylean might purposely go to a primitive world, perhaps on a journey of spiritual discovery. Most Syleans are very directed and would rarely slip into the wanderer career, although there could be exceptions.

As for the Rogue career, most Syleans gravitate towards honourable professions that provide them with financial and spiritual prosperity, avoiding those that directly involve them in crime for crime's sake. That said, they are no more or less ethical than humans of any other kind and might indulge in underworld-oriented activities if there are extenuating circumstances. A thief might be in the employ of a corporation, engaged in skulduggery to acquire goods and intelligence by underhanded means. An enforcer might be in the employ of a Sylean cartel or syndicate, which are remarkably similar to the organised crime organisations of other species. Syleans are unlikely to operate as independent pirates but may very well serve as corporate privateers or corsairs who raid enemy shipping with a letter of marque.

In addition to the above career choices, many Syleans are religious and subscribe to one of the traditional Sylean faiths. Sylean Travellers in the priesthood may use the Believer career from the *Traveller Companion*.

WEALTH AND PROSPERITY

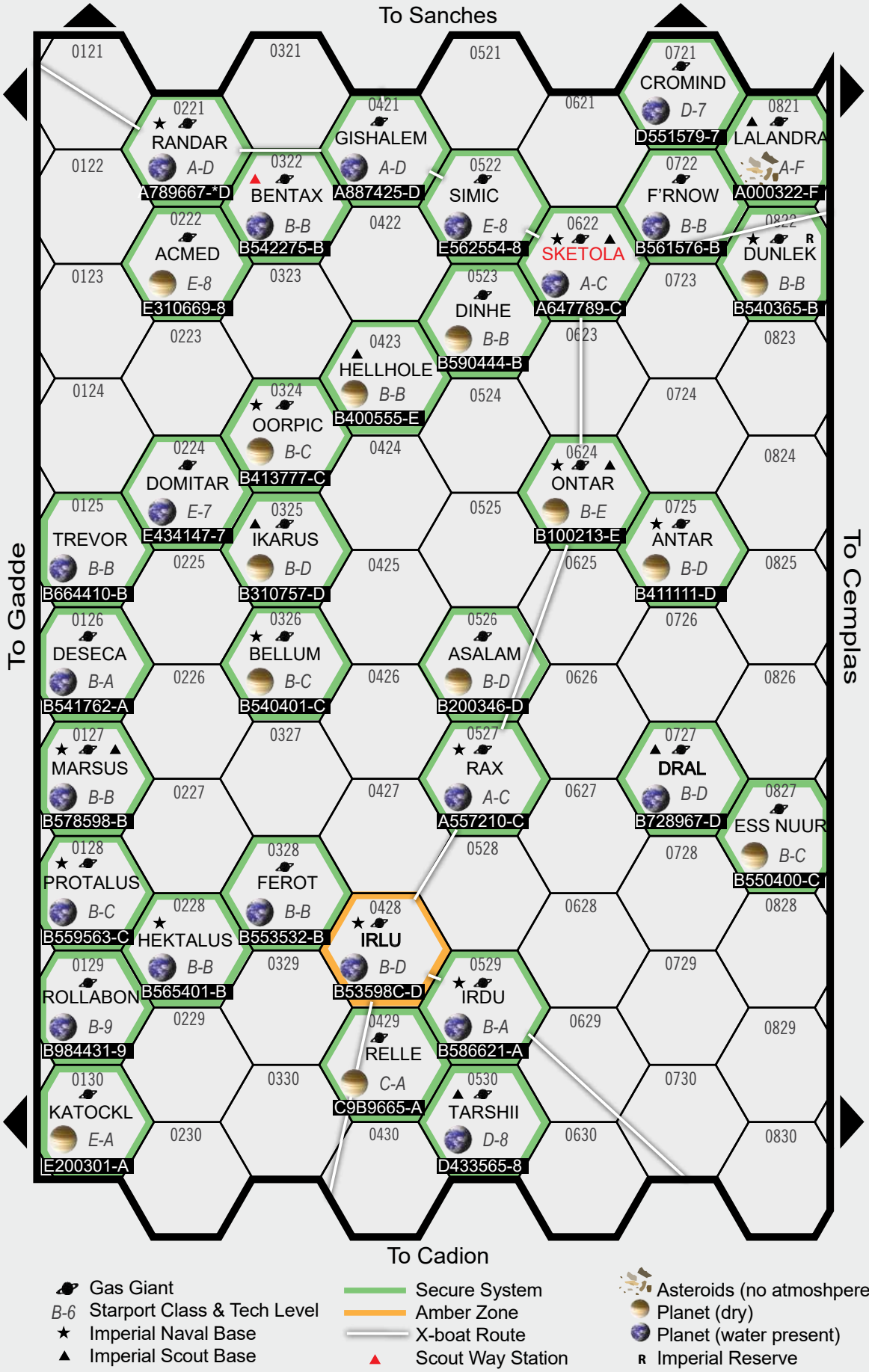
Syleans are driven by a desire for prosperity and wealth and receive DM+1 on all Cash Benefit rolls when mustering out of their careers.

BUNKERIA

Bunkeria was once home to a large portion of the Interstellar Confederacy, a multi-world polity that got its start during the Long Night. The string of Confederacy worlds extended from the Hektalus system in Bunkeria to Velpare in Cemplas, encompassing 32 star systems at its peak. The Confederacy looked as if it would pose a major challenge to the Sylean Federation for supremacy in the Core sector but its lack of unity was ultimately its downfall. Two wars determined the destiny of the Confederation, the first of which was lost to better organised Sylean squadrons who routed disjointed Confederacy forces in the Battle of Velpare. The second was a brutal civil war in which the Confederacy lost its capital at Sketola to rebel forces. Sketola was eventually reconquered but the damage was done. The Sylean Federation was able to exploit the weaknesses of the Confederacy, causing it to collapse one year before the founding of the Third Imperium.

The Interstellar Confederacy may have died long ago but its spirit and culture lives on. The worlds of Bunkeria have cultivated a flair for independence within the confines of the Imperium. Bunkerians celebrate Liberation Day to commemorate the reacquisition of Sketola from the rebels. The celebration includes festivals to honour famous war heroes, politicians and other historical figures. There are art exhibits, re-enactments of great battles, feasts and banquets and all sorts of other entertainments. Bunkerian worlds are drawn together by a shared history and heritage that unites them in ways that most subsectors are not.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Acmed	0222		E310669-8	Na Ni		G
Antar	0725	N	B411111-D	Ht Ic Lo		G
Asalam	0526		B200346-D	Ht Lo Va		G
Bellum	0326	N	B540401-C	Ht De Ni Po		G
Bentax	0322	W	B542275-B	Lo Po		G
Cromind	0721		D551579-7	Ni Po		G
Deseca	0126		B541762-A	Po		G
Dinhe	0523		B590444-B	De Ni		G
Domitar	0224		E434147-7	Lo		G
Dral	0727	S	B728967-D	Hi Ht In		G
Dunlek	0822	N	B540365-B	De Lo Po		G
Ess Nuur	0827		B550400-C	De Ht Ni Po		G
F'rnow	0722		B561576-B	Ni		G
Ferot	0328		B553532-B	Ni Po		G
Gishalem	0421		A887425-D	Ga Ht Ni		G
Hektalus	0228	N	B565401-B	Ni		
Hellhole	0423	S	B400555-E	Ht Ni Va		
Ikarus	0325	S	B310757-D	Ht Na		G
Irdu	0529	N	B586621-A	Ag Ni Ri		G
Irlu	0428	N	B53598C-D	Hi Ht	A	G
Katock	0130		E200301-A	Lo Va		G
Lalandra	0821	S	A000322-F	As Ht Lo Va		G
Marsus	0127	N S	B578598-B	Ag Ni		G
Ontar	0624	N S	B100213-E	Ht Lo Va		G
Oorpic	0324	N	B413777-C	Ht Ic Na		G
Protalus	0128	N	B559563-C	Ht Ni		G
Randar	0221	N	A789667-D	Ht Ni Ri		G
Rax	0527	N	A557210-C	Ht Lo		G
Relle	0429		C9B9665-A	Fl Ni		G
Rollabon	0129		B984431-9	Ni		G
Simic	0522		E562554-8	Ni		G
Sketola	0622	N S	A647789-C	Ag Ht		G
Tarshii	0530	S	D433565-8	Ni Po		G
Trevor	0125		B664410-B	Ni		



Gas Giant
B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
★ Imperial Naval Base
▲ Imperial Scout Base
Secure System
Amber Zone
X-boat Route
Scout Way Station
Asteroids (no atmoshpere/water)
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)
R Imperial Reserve

BUNKERIA SUBSECTOR

Bunkeria is defended by the Imperial Navy's 217th Fleet, one of the smallest numbered fleets in all of the Core with only two full-time squadrons. A rarity in the Imperium, Bunkeria's 217th Colonial Fleet is actually larger than its numbered fleet with four full squadrons at its disposal. The ships of the official 217th are highly capable TL15 spacecraft with jump-4 capability while the Colonial 217th is composed of locally built ships that average TL13 and jump-3. Bunkeria's Colonial Navy ships are some of the most colourful in the fleet, adorned with the martial regalia and names of heroes from their vibrant historical past. Because of how few squadrons it has, the 217th primarily patrols the worlds along the Sylean Main, while the 217th Colonial patrols the interior of Bunkeria including the Irlu and Dral Clusters.

Sketola is the capital of the subsector and headquarters of both the subsector and Colonial fleets. The economic powerhouse of Bunkeria is the F'rnow system, home of the sector-wide Achenaar Antilles Line, which was founded during the era of the Interstellar Confederacy and remains one of the most powerful corporations in all of the Core. Achenaar Antilles has over 1,000 ships in its fleet, most of which operate on the Sylean Main.

The Imperium is leery of Bunkeria's independent streak but have been cautious not to spoil a good thing. In spite of its relatively small population, the spirited worlds of Bunkeria have done their part to help grow the traffic along the Sylean Main. Furthermore, the subsector is remarkably stable with only one world classified as an Amber Zone. While Bunkeria is certainly not the Core's best and brightest locale, it has undeniable appeal and a seemingly bright future.

HELLHOLE

The aptly named Hellhole has always been a difficult world to live on but also one that has been deemed worth the trouble. The planet has been stripped of its crust by multiple deep impacts over its long history, giving mining companies easy access to the exotic minerals and heavy metals in its exposed mantle. Unfortunately, its surface is teeming with radioactivity, which made it a deadly place to work during the era of the Interstellar Confederacy when its miners only had access to TL12 safety gear. Now under Imperial management, there are very few human miners on its surface with most of the work being done by high-tech radiation-shielded robots. Almost all of Hellhole's population lives on the close-orbit highport or one of its Lagrange-point processing and shipping centres. Mining activity is performed remotely by well-paid remote operations engineers who do the delicate work of extracting Hellhole's abundant resources from a safe distance of 1,000km.

While gifted with a placid, long-lived star, the entire Hellhole system has barely a drop of water or wisp of atmosphere on its 11 planets. With no gas giants or planetoid belts to speak of, ships cannot perform wilderness refuelling. Liquid hydrogen must be imported into the system, making it exorbitantly expensive. Travellers can expect to pay three times the standard price for fuel, all of which is refined at the highport.

The Revived Grand Senate on Sketola snaps up as much of Hellhole's product as it can using loans from the Achenaar Antilles Line. Sketola claims that these resources are used to maintain the Colonial Navy but the Imperium has begun to cry foul. There simply is no way that all of the extracted materials could be put to use by one provincial navy, or so the Imperium believes. Auditors from the Office of the Exchequer have descended upon Hellhole to make sure nothing is amiss.

IRLU

The Meritocracy of Irlu purportedly uses a nonpartisan selection process to identify and appoint the best-qualified sophonts among its population to fill its administrative and governmental positions. Like so many other corrupt bureaucracies, its levers have been usurped by those in power to obtain roles for selected allies and family members regardless of their qualifications. While the selection process still manages to see to it that some of the cream rises to the top, the system has become so corrupt that many of its offices and institutions have been rendered utterly ineffective.

One of the organisations that does seem to work rather well is the Office of Mercenary Affairs (OMA). Due to unusual circumstances, the OMA was tasked with the coordination of defence forces for nearly all the worlds of Bunkeria. When the Interstellar Confederacy was integrated into the Imperium, the armies and militias of its member worlds surrendered their arms and were occupied first by Sylean forces and later by the Imperial Army.

The young Imperium was unable to sustain the occupation and sought to return Bunkeria's pacified worlds to local control. During the Confederacy Era, the world of Marsus was a renowned exporter of mercenary forces. Unfortunately, Marsus had fallen on hard times after fighting on the wrong side of the Civil War. Even after its decline, Marsusian mercenaries remained some of the best-qualified fighting forces in the subsector. The

Imperium imported the best and brightest mercenary commanders from Marsus to Irlu where they were given the daunting task of guiding the worlds of Bunkeria to military self-rule. In fits and starts, they gradually accomplished their goal. Early contracts were given to trusted mercenary companies but as the scope of the job became larger, they were eventually forced to recruit talent from neighbouring subsectors. Over time, the practice of employing professional soldiers to serve in its worlds' armies took hold.

The OMA had help, of course. The management of a subsector-wide bureaucracy was a bit beyond its expertise. Enter: Instellarms, the megacorporate buyer, seller and manufacturer of weapons systems. As the leading provider for mercenary companies throughout the Imperium, Instellarms was eager to become involved in the OMA. In return for sponsorship, the OMA gets reduced prices on all gear it requires as well as favourable lease terms for *Broadsword*-class mercenary cruisers to transport troops.

While the practice of employing strictly mercenaries is anathema to most worlds of the Imperium, it seems to work in Bunkeria. Its mercenary forces exhibit a high level of professionalism and have become sought after outside the subsector. The vaunted OMA Seal of Approval is given to the best mercenary companies, a practice which thus far has not been corrupted by Irlu's disingenuous meritocracy.

MAJOR RAYNIER GRGIC

Major Grgic is a retired ex-mercenary and current regional manager for the bonding authority of the OMA. If the Travellers are mercenaries, he can get them the most favourable rates in the subsector on a repatriation bond. He is also well-connected with Instellarms and can hook them up with just about any weapons they want short of tactical nukes. However, the more powerful and illegal the weaponry, the steeper the price. The laws are stringent on Irlu, so Grgic prefers to make arms deals on neighbouring Irdu, which has almost no law to speak of.

MAJOR RAYNIER GRGIC

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	Male	55

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	9	INT	11	Admin 3, Advocate 2, Athletics 1 (strength), Broker 3, Drive (tracked) 2, Electronics (sensors) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Heavy Weapons (man-portable) 1, Leadership 3, Melee (blade) 1, Recon 2
DEX	6	EDU	11	
END	9	SOC	6	

EQUIPMENT	Hand Computer **Weapons:** Gauss Pistol (3D), Static Blade (3D+2, AP 6) **Armour:** Flak Jacket (+5)

LALANDRA

Lalandra was the headquarters of the feckless Interstellar Confederacy Naval Administration. Proud naval historians have often sought to paint a rosier narrative of the Confederacy Navy, one which seeks to cover up the fact that in the hour of need, it utterly failed to perform to expectations. In reality, the navy was a microcosm of the Confederacy government: a disjointed collection of organisations intended to cooperate with one another but which were incapable of doing so when it mattered most. Regardless of the truth, the Lalandra Museum of Naval History is a popular attraction for both Bunkerians and foreign tourists alike. It includes two departments: an indoor facility located in one of the Lalandra Belt's largest planetoids and 'The Shipyard', a large collection of now ancient naval starships that have been arranged for the viewing pleasure of its visitors. Tourists may spend days or even weeks, travelling from ship-to-ship. Most have been restored to resemble their original states but some have been deliberately left as wrecks. Two of the most popular exhibits in the naval museum are the cryogenically preserved body of Admiral Moshe Halfview – the cyborg military hero credited with quashing the rebellion at Sketola – and the *Exatar*, an espionage ship that used unique 'ramscoop' technology.

In addition to its normal duties, the Lalandra Scout Base has liaison officers who work with the local ship-building industry. Some of the scouts' most advanced craft are assembled here, including advanced versions of its *Suleiman*- and *Donosev*-class starships. For years, the Colonial Naval Administration on Sketola has sought to expand Lalandra's facilities to include the construction of naval vessels but they have been turned down by the Imperial government thus far. If anything, Sketola's frequent entreaties only make the Imperium more nervous about Bunkerian naval independence. While their TL13 Colonial Navy is of little concern to the Admiralty, the thought of giving Bunkeria access to a TL15 shipyard is not one they are willing to entertain.

HIGH GUARD: RAMSCOOP (TL12)

Ramscoops are passive hydrogen collectors that operate automatically whenever a starship is manoeuvring in normal (non-jump) space. Ramscoops require several weeks of continuous operation to obtain enough hydrogen to fill the tanks of a typical ship. The ship must be actively manoeuvring during this time, which enables the ramscoops to extract hydrogen from the interstellar medium. Ramscoop ships do not have fuel scoops, nor do they have fuel processors since the hydrogen is processed and purified as it is collected. The advantage of this technology is that it enables a starship to make as many jumps as desired without ever visiting a starport or gas giant for refuelling purposes.

Ramscoops require one percent of a ship's available tonnage plus five tons, with a minimum overall size of 10 tons and can collect five tons of hydrogen per week for every ton attributed to the ramscoops. Additional tonnage may be added as desired. Ramscoops cost Cr250000 per ton.

The typical configuration for ramscoops is an array of cylinders or similar structures fitted on the exterior of a ship, co-located with its fuel tanks. Because of the bulkiness of the collectors, ships outfitted with ramscoops cannot perform atmospheric re-entry without damaging the ramscoops and are therefore rarely streamlined. If the ship is docked or otherwise immobile, ramscoops cease to function but will automatically resume operation once the ship starts manoeuvring again.

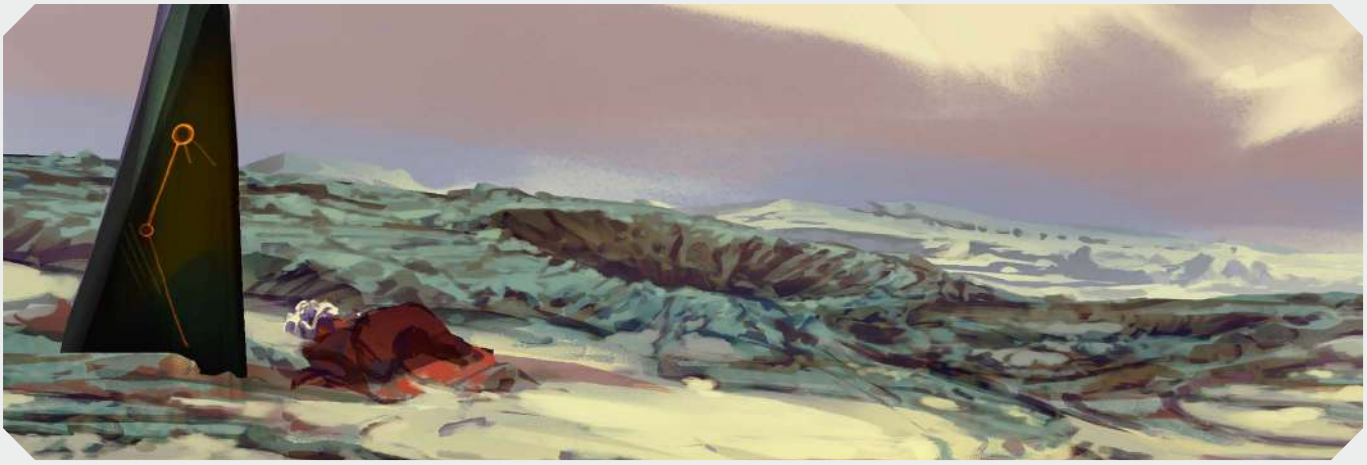
While ramscoops were an innovative use of technology by Interstellar Confederacy engineers, were ultimately deemed an inefficient use of space and are rarely seen in service.

CEMPLAS

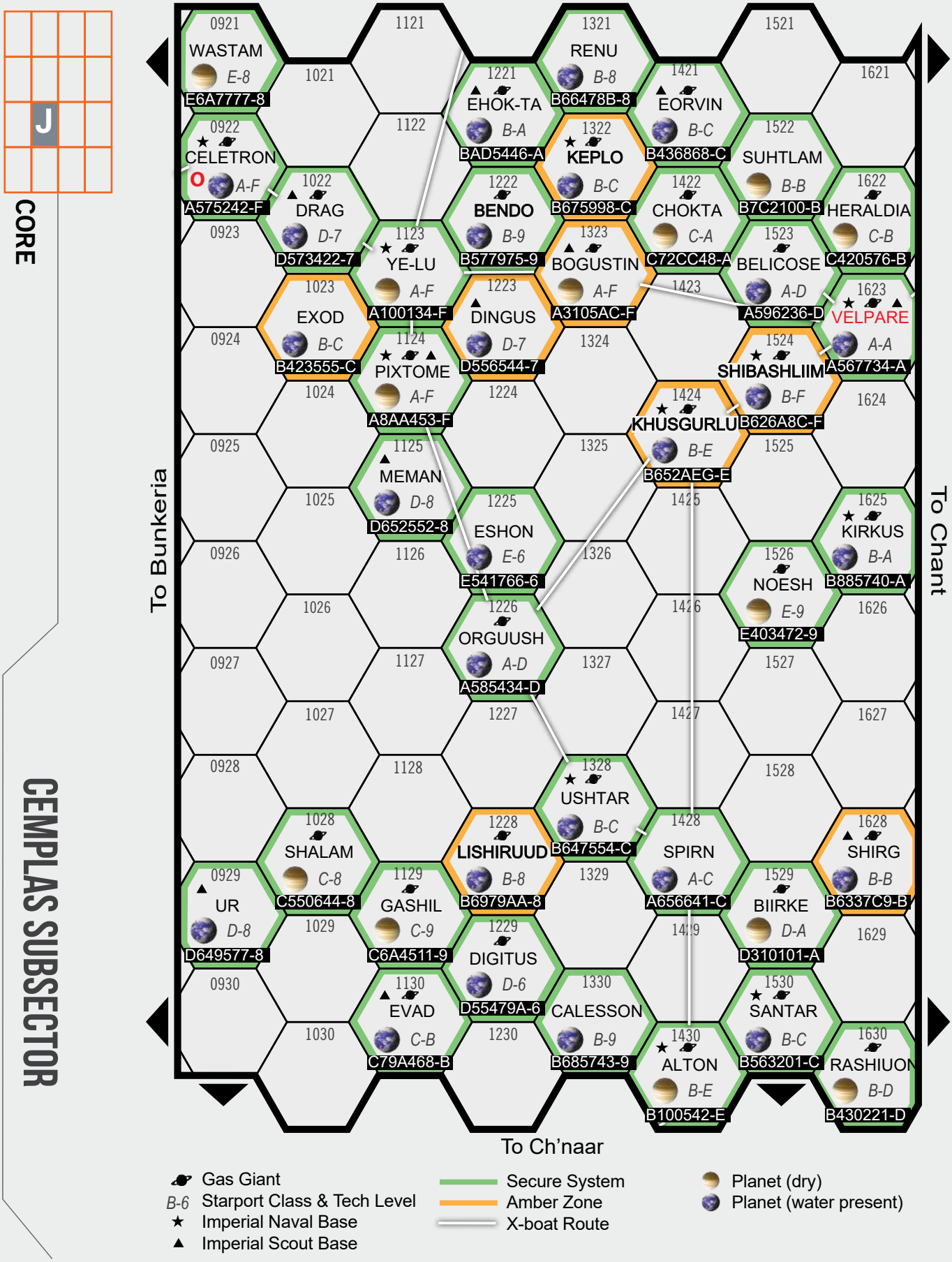
Many worlds of Cemplas were members of the Interstellar Confederacy, which challenged the Sylean Federation for dominance of the Core before the rise of the Third Imperium. Cemplas is a region of sharp contrasts. Unlike the former Confederacy worlds in Bunkeria, those of Cemplas underwent a difficult transition into the Imperium, which in many ways was never fully consummated. Bunkeria rarely saw direct conflict with Sylean forces but major wars were fought on the worlds of Cemplas, some of which still bear the scars today. Because of this, there was a great deal more resentment towards the Syleans and their new Imperium. Many of these worlds grudgingly relented to Imperial authority and developed cultures that take umbrage to any perceived interference in their affairs. Time heals all wounds but even after 1,000 years, there are feelings of mistrust between the close-knit worlds of Cemplas and its Imperial overlords. While a large-scale insurgency would be virtually impossible to carry out, Imperial intelligence agencies keep a close eye on Cemplas for any trouble that might be brewing. There is little danger of outright rebellion but Cemplas is on a shorter leash than Bunkeria and probably always will be.

The spirit of rebellion lives on in Cemplas. It is a place of both great wealth and immense challenges. Cemplas is home to some of the most technologically advanced worlds in all of the Core but also harbours some of its most oppressive dictatorships. Cemplas has four industrial worlds, three of which – Bendo, Keplo and Shibashliim – are ideally located along the Sylean Main. Near the heart of the Core and in close proximity to Capital, these worlds are of great importance to Cemplas and the region at large. Bendo and Keplo manufacture low- to mid-tech consumer goods and the factories of Shibashliim – which cover the majority of the planet's surface and sprawling swaths of its sea bed – produce high-end computer systems and electronics. The governors of Shibashliim have large stakes in the megacorporation Naasirka, which holds a monopoly of the planet's industrial capital. The fourth industrial world, Lishiruud, is located in the rimward portion of the subsector and sits upon a small jump-1 main where competing merchant companies run liners and megafreighters and operate a network of subsidised merchant routes in the surrounding markets.

Innovation in Cemplas is fuelled by the Imperial Navy, which has ultra-high-tech research and development centres on Celetron and Ye-lu. Both are on the verge of major breakthroughs in automation and artificial intelligence. Celetron is developing autonomous starships and Ye-lu has all of its essential functions controlled by an AI computer network. Both worlds are high-value strategic assets and heavily defended by the 160th Fleet. While they are fully engaged in the development of military hardware and software, each has agencies that share consumer-oriented tech with civilian firms. Meanwhile, private companies on Shibashliim are competing in the cutting-edge field of matter transport. While some are close to being able to transmit small amounts of matter across continental distances, a few niche companies are attempting to use the technology to teleport radio waves across an entire star system. If successful, they will have invented the Imperium's first working FTL communications device.



Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Alton	1430	N	B100542-E	Ht Ni Va		G
Belicose	1523		A596236-D	Ht Lo		G
Bendo	1222		B577975-9	Hi In		G
Biirke	1529		D310101-A	Lo		G
Bogustin	1323	S	A3105AC-F	Ht Ni	A	G
Calesson	1330		B685743-9	Ag Ga Ri		
Celetron	0922	N	A575242-F	Ht Lo		G
Chokta	1422		C7C2248-A	Fl Lo		G
Digitus	1229		D55479A-6	Ag		G
Dingus	1223	S	D556544-7	Ag Ni	A	
Drag	1022	S	D573422-7	Ni		G
Ehok-ta	1221	S	BAD5446-A	Ni		G
Eorvin	1421	S	B436868-C	Ht		G
Eshon	1225		E541766-6	Po		
Evad	1130	S	C79A468-B	Ni Wa		G
Exod	1023		B423555-C	Ht Ni Po	A	
Gashil	1129		C6A4511-9	Fl Ni		G
Heraldia	1622		C420576-B	De Ni Po		G
Keplo	1322	N	B675998-C	Hi Ht In	A	G
Khusgurlu	1424	N	B652AEG-E	Hi Ht Po	A	G
Kirkus	1625	N	B885740-A	Ag Ga Ht Ri		G
Lishiruud	1228		B6979AA-8	Hi In	A	G
Meman	1125	S	D652552-8	Ni Po		
Noesh	1526		E403472-9	Ic Ni Va		G
Orguush	1226		A585434-D	Ht Ni		G
Pixtome	1124	N S	A8AA453-F	Ht Fl Ni		G
Rashiuon	1630		B430221-D	De Ht Lo Po		G
Renu	1321		B66478B-8	Ag Ri		
Santar	1530	N	B563201-C	Ht Lo		G
Shalam	1028		C550644-8	De Ni Po		G
Shibashliim	1524	N	B626A8C-F	Hi Ht In	A	G
Shirg	1628	S	B6337C9-B	Na Po	A	G
Spirn	1428		A656641-C	Ag Ga Ht Ni		
Suhtlam	1522		B7C2100-B	Fl Lo		
Ur	0929	S	D649577-8	Ni		
Ushtar	1328	N	B647554-C	Ag Ht Ni		G
Velpare	1623	N S	A567734-A	Ag Ri		G
Wastam	0921		E6A7777-8	Fl		
Ye-lu	1123	N	A100134-F	Ht Lo Va		G


CORE
J
CEMPLAS SUBSECTOR
To Mekee
To Bunkeria
To Chant
To Ch'naar
0921
WASTAM
E-8
E6A7777-8
1021
1121
1221
EHOK-TA
B-A
BAD5446-A
1321
RENU
B-8
B66478B-8
1421
EORVIN
B-C
B436868-C
1521
1621
0922
CELETRON
A-F
A575242-F
1022
DRAG
D-7
D573422-7
1122
1222
BENDO
B-9
B577975-9
1322
KEPLO
B-C
B675998-C
1422
CHOKTA
C-A
C72CC48-A
1522
SUHTLAM
B-B
B7C2100-B
1622
HERALDIA
C-B
C420576-B
0923
1023
EXOD
B-C
B423555-C
1123
YE-LU
A-F
A100134-F
1223
DINGUS
D-7
D556544-7
1323
BOGUSTIN
A-F
A3105AC-F
1423
1523
BELICOSE
A-D
A596236-D
1623
VELPARE
A-A
A567734-A
0924
1124
PIXTOME
A-F
A8AA453-F
1324
1524
SHIBASHLIIM
B-F
B626A8C-F
1024
1224
1424
KHUSGURLU
B-E
B652AEG-E
1624
0925
1125
MEMAN
D-8
D652552-8
1325
1525
1025
1225
ESHON
E-6
E541766-6
1425
1625
KIRKUS
B-A
B885740-A
0926
1126
1326
1526
NOESH
E-9
E403472-9
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1226
ORGUUSH
A-D
A585434-D
1426
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1027
1227
1427
1627
0928
1128
1328
USHTAR
B-C
B647554-C
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1028
SHALAM
C-8
C550644-8
1228
LISHIRUUD
B-8
B6979AA-8
1428
SPIRN
A-C
A656641-C
1628
SHIRG
B-B
B6337C9-B
0929
UR
D-8
D649577-8
1129
GASHIL
C-9
C6A4511-9
1329
1529
BIIRKE
D-A
D310101-A
1029
1229
DIGITUS
D-6
D55479A-6
1629
0930
1130
EVAD
C-B
C79A468-B
1330
CALESSON
B-9
B685743-9
1530
SANTAR
B-C
B563201-C
1030
1230
1430
ALTON
B-E
B100542-E
1630
RASHIUON
B-D
B430221-D
Gas Giant
B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
Imperial Naval Base
Imperial Scout Base
Secure System
Amber Zone
X-boat Route
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)

BIIRKE

In a frontier sector, Biirke is the type of system that might be left barren but in the Core there are no such places. The system's bright white main sequence star and its unstable red dwarf companion have swept most of the resource-poor planets clean of atmospheres and water, leaving little reason for settlers to stay. Biirke itself is a cold dustball chosen by a small resource-development company to host an automated Class D highport. Small craft pilots were hired to fly tankers to and from the system's gas giants, bringing unrefined liquid hydrogen to be sold as fuel. Robots would be there to help visiting Travellers refuel their ships quickly and efficiently so they could move on to more promising ports of call. When the expected traffic failed to materialise and the company went bankrupt, the facility was abandoned. It turns out that most visitors to the system had opted to perform wilderness refuelling rather than travel to the out-of-the-way starport.

About a decade later, the mothballed starport was salvaged and refurbished by belters who had been fruitlessly searching Biirke's planetoid belts for prospects. The savvy belters stripped the idle robots of their brains, reprogrammed them and fitted them into the tankers, which now make perpetual fuel runs to and from the gas giants, constantly replenishing the station's fuel supply. While Biirke's appeal has scarcely improved, traffic to the port has experienced a noticeable uptick. The belters turned it into a co-op, offering a share to others in their profession provided they participate in the highport maintenance rotation. They converted two of the station's four docking bays into a market bazaar, which visiting merchants use to trade speculative cargo with each other. Members of the co-op recently salvaged an abandoned subsidised merchant, which they intend to refit and hire out to a crew, provided they limit their operations to the Lishiruud Cluster.

EHOK-TA

Virtually all of Ehok-ta's 10,000 inhabitants are in the employ of Ne-ka-otabi, an entrepreneurial venture run by Syleans and Bwaps (refer to the *Traveller Companion* or *Aliens of Charted Space Volume 3* for more on the Bwaps). The firm used a large portion of its seed money to purchase a small gravitic city that was designed and built to their specifications by General Products, LIC. Ne-ka-otabi uses industrial robots from Shibashliim to mine the resources of the planet below. The gravity, atmospheric pressure and heat on the surface is much too high for a permanent settlement but it is rich in rare-earth minerals and petrochemicals. The city floats high above the clouds where the temperature and atmosphere are more comfortable. Even at high altitude, the air is dense and humid, which is just fine for Bwaps but often a bit uncomfortable for human inhabitants.

The workers elect a Civic Council that runs a union, requests infrastructure improvements, operates utilities and manages the purchase of offworld foodstuffs and other goods. The Council advises Ne-ka-otabi corporate officers on what the population needs but the company is under no legal obligation to do anything other than pay their employees. The operation has an opportunity to do extremely well, making the company and its employees rich. However, despite bringing in impressive resource hauls, Ne-ka-otabi has struggled to make a profit thus far. To make matters worse, the city's gravitic pylons have been failing at an alarming rate. The extraction bots, purchased on Shibashliim, have been performing to expectations but the technology that keeps the city afloat has been subpar. Its gravitic support system has multi-redundant safeguards, so there is no imminent danger of it plunging into the crushing depths of Ehok-ta but the frequent failure alarms and subsequent costs incurred for repairs are unnerving for the city's residents. Many question the decision making of the Ne-ka-otabi executives and have petitioned to have them replaced.

HERALDIA

Heraldia is a trinary system with three red dwarf stars, the largest of which is in distant circumbinary orbit around the smaller two, which orbit each other around a common centre of mass. There are two key worlds in the system: Heraldia and Gyga. Heraldia orbits Uli-Beta, the second largest star in the system, while the gas giant Gyga orbits Uli-Alpha, the largest of the three red dwarves.

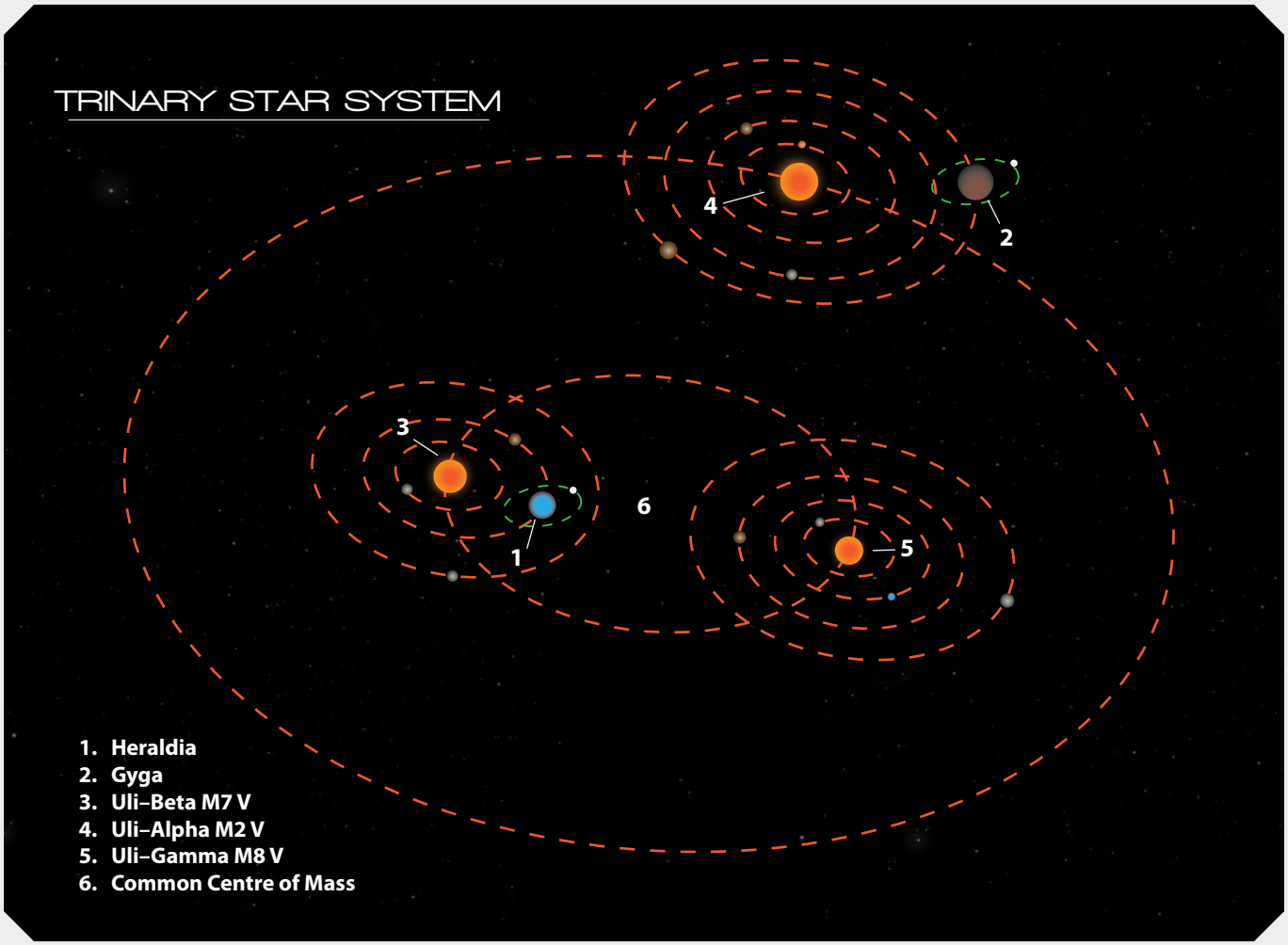
Heraldia was once a strategically important world of the Interstellar Confederacy and bore the brunt of the assault from the Sylean Federation during the war between the two powers. To avoid the long end-around through Velpare, Sylean squadrons often entered the fray at Heraldia. Confederacy forces were stretched thin trying to defend both Heraldia and Gyga. The battles around Gyga left dozens of wrecks behind, most of which have plummeted into the gas giant's gravity well over the centuries. The few that remain have been preserved and converted into war memorials and tourist attractions. Heraldia itself also bears the scars of the war. Its atmosphere was tainted

with fallout from the orbital bombardment of its cities and its hydrosphere was virtually eliminated, leaving the world a desert wasteland. Heraldians were forced into domed and subterranean structures to survive the intense stellar radiation from the system's three suns. Life is hard on Heraldia but even after 1,200 years the descendants of those who fought here have a solemn pride in their ancestry.

Many worlds celebrate war-time glories but few do so with the fervour of Heraldia. Just about every particle accelerator burn, nuclear crater, blasted grav tank and wrecked structure has been marked as a historical site. At the extremes, the dropped plasma rifles and suits of combat armour worn by key war heroes have been preserved under transparent plasteel right where they fell in action. Heraldians chafe at the suggestion that they have gone overboard worshipping the sites of their ancestors' sacrifices. Martyrdom is big business on Heraldia and the world attracts millions of tourists each year. During peak months, the tourist population outnumbers the planet's permanent residents.

KHUSGURLU

The supreme pontiff of Khusgurlu is Aulonn Jhourdan-Valestin. While this particular 'instance' of the man has led the Church of the Chosen Few for only the last two decades, he has in a way led it for the last 2,000 years. Jhourdan-Valestin and virtually all 20 billion of his parishioners are clones. The Church keeps a catalogue of approximately 12 billion approved DNA templates, each of which is a permanent 'citizen' of the planet. Some twins are allowed to occur but triplets are prevented by the cloning process. Approximately five billion Khusgurluans are duplicates, so at any one time there might be two or three clones of one template in circulation. After one lives a full life and dies a natural death – anagathics are strictly forbidden – they are `resurrected` by having their template implanted into and taken to term by a female. The Church is monotheistic and the people believe that God protects them and grants them 'immortality' in exchange for strict adherence to its rituals. While coital behaviour between couples is allowed as a



ritual activity, natural reproduction is not. Motherhood only occurs at the behest of the Church and only through implantation. Despite a comprehensive high-tech surveillance network and virtually infallible contraception, natural childbirths do occur from time-to-time. Natural reproduction is a high crime and punishable by the death of both parents and their naturally created child. The parents are referred to as 'heretics' and children as 'abominations'.

It should be noted that Khusgurlu's use of cloning technology and consciousness templates treads a fine line with recent Imperial law. In 1070, Emperor Paulo III ruled that consciousness transfer is a crime because it tampers with the mind of a sentient life form. The Church of the Chosen Few got around the law by establishing that its clones are not fitted with the consciousnesses of live individuals but merely with copies of a template. The templates themselves are artificial constructs, none of which are based on brain patterns extracted from actual living beings, or at least so the Church claims. The practice began during the murk of the Long Night and there is no concrete proof to the contrary.

Upon resurrection, most Khusgurluans embark upon a unique life experience, meaning they do not fill the same role or live in the same geographic location as their previous clone; however, a favourite pastime is looking into the Church's extensive databases to see one's past lives. The texts and holovideos are edited to convey the virtues of a duty-bound, pious lifestyle. While they may have filled many roles during previous lives – perhaps a genetic scientist in one life, a soldier in another and a labourer in the one after that – these histories convey a frightening consistency designed to encourage conformity and obedience. No one wants to view their past lives to discover they were rebellious and brought shame to the church or had dangerous independent thoughts.

While its origins are lost in the murk of history, the Church of the Chosen Few is thought to have resulted from the struggles of the Long Night. Khusgurlu, a moon of the system's innermost gas giant, was the site of a Vilani colony that was left intact by the Terrans during the Rule of Man. The system has reasonably rich resources in its planetoid belt and other gas giant moons (it has no independent planets) but Khusgurlu itself is its only marginally habitable world and only just. Its intemperate red dwarf star spews flares every few decades, most of which only last a few hours. When Khusgurlu is occluded by its gas giant, it suffers few effects. When it is not, the flares strip away much of its atmosphere which is, over time, restored by the world's abundant genetically engineered plant life. The flares had historically caused a large number of deaths and genetic mutations, endangering the viability of the colony. To prevent its collapse, Khusgurluan scientists developed a library of genetic templates, which they kept in circulation through an implantation process. It is likely that the Church is an outgrowth of this meticulous process.

The Church of the Chosen Few is loyal to the Imperium and willingly subscribes to the notion that Capital is its political nexus; however, they believe that Khusgurlu is its spiritual centre and that the Imperium would greatly benefit from adopting similar rituals. Missionaries from the Church are commonly encountered throughout the Core. While they do not invite offworlders to their own planet, they do encourage them to adopt Church practices and have built temples on worlds throughout the Core. Khusgurluans who have proven their piety are allowed to serve in the Imperial armed forces, which they use as yet another opportunity to evangelise their religion. Anyone allowed to leave their homeworld is implanted with surveillance augments to ensure they remain faithful.

VELPARE

Velpare is a key stop along the Sylean Main, linking the Keplo and Vvrin Clusters. The system primary is a long-lived orange main sequence star called Auroralari. The richness of Auroralari's planetary disk gave birth to several worlds and gas giant moons with a diverse array of atmospheric compositions. Velpare itself is gifted with a breathable oxygen-nitrogen mix and a lush biosphere of highly evolved flora and fauna. Much like Capital, Velpare has a larger-than-normal molten iron core, giving it higher gravity and a more powerful magnetosphere than would otherwise be present for a world of its size.

Velpare was the site of a famous battle between the Interstellar Confederacy and the Sylean Federation. Disorganised Confederacy naval forces were no match for the strategic savvy of Sylean Commodore Orori Rudolph. However, the Syleans went a bridge too far by bucking orders and launching an orbital assault in which their marines were soundly defeated by Velparian army and militia forces. The commodore and his officer corps were subjected to a court martial and subsequent dishonourable discharge for their

actions. Having saved face and maintained the pristine condition of their world, Confederacy forces sued for peace and were granted self-rule provided they pledge fealty to Sylea. This they did and their government gradually evolved into a non-charismatic dictatorship in which their leader became Duke of Velpare. As the centuries passed and the Third Imperium took charge, Velparian leadership became more autocratic, which resulted in a number of revolts and terrorist attacks by resistance forces. These were violently put down and the world was eventually occupied by forces from Shibashliim, which established military rule. In 978, rebels infiltrated the garrison, assassinated several Shibashliimi officers and destroyed key strategic resources, expelling the tyrannical duke to the equatorial jungles. Imperial arbitrators brokered an armistice by which the Shibashliimi were expelled from the system and self-rule was restored.

The exiled duke is still the official representative of Velpare but the world is now effectively governed by five baronies, which oversee the world's cities, agricultural districts and wildlife preserves. Ironically, Velpare was made capital of Cemplas one month after the coup, thereby promoting the exiled noble to the role of subsector duke. In the absence of the duke, the barons collectively share the responsibility of representing Cemplas.

The barons of Velpare lead with a light touch and allow for a great many personal freedoms including the possession of non-military weapons for self-defence. House militias may legally use military weapons provided they pledge to engage in joint exercises and assist with the planet's defence should the need arise. Unfortunately, the spectre of dictatorship and the occupation still haunts Velpare. The ousted duke remains in hiding, using superior Shibashliimi technology to mask the presence of his forces. No one knows if the original duke still rules or if his successors are now in charge. The group occasionally raids baronial farms and perpetrates acts of terrorism, destroying public buildings, infrastructure and settlements on the periphery of Velpare Downport. Rumour has it the barons plan to pool their resources to hire offworld mercenaries to assist them with the expulsion of the duke and his army. Since the duke is still ostensibly a member of the Peerage, no one is quite sure how the Imperium will react to such a move. Furthermore, other members of the Moot have pointed out that Velpare is a case in point for why it is best to keep Imperium bureaucracy and world leadership separate. Leading members of the advisory body have petitioned the Emperor to separate the powers but he has thus far resisted their requests to do so.

In spite of its problems, Velpare welcomes interstellar commerce and offworld immigrants in an attempt to further establish its presence on the Sylean Main. Velpare is a beautiful world with sprawling primeval forests, equatorial rainforests and extensive mountain ranges that attract tourists and adventurous Travellers from throughout the Core. Its cosmopolitan cities are popular destinations, known for their excellent cuisine, all of which is made from locally grown ingredients. Their post popular dishes are spiced with extracts of the varinte plant, which is prized for its flavour throughout the Core and beyond.

Velpare hosts both Imperial Navy and scout bases. The bulk of scout personnel are from the Communications branch, which coordinates x-boat routes and starship resources along the entire Sylean Main.

YE-LU

Ye-lu is one of two worlds in Cemplas wholly owned by the Imperial Navy, the other being Celetron. Ye-lu is a tiny airless rockball that serves as the testing ground for an automated conscious intelligence that runs the entire planet. This software, which answers to the name 'Mother', uses advanced, nearly instantaneous meson communicators for all of its instructions.

The Imperial government and – to a lesser degree – its armed forces have always had an irrational fear of artificial intelligence, borne of their partially Vilani heritage and various mishaps that have occurred over the ages. While the Ye-lu installation and those like it are controversial, there are legally mandated mitigation technologies present that prevent applications like Mother from being truly autonomous. Ye-lu skirts these regulations very closely.

The entire world is, metaphorically speaking, a multi-cellular organism. Mother controls all of its computer systems, utilities, thousands of robots and trillions of microbots and nanites, making her own decisions about what needs to be added, removed or altered as demands change. On a given day, personnel at the station might notice a new wing under construction without knowing about it ahead of time. Mother posts all of her activities in a database accessible

to the human staff but it is difficult to keep up with her myriad projects. At present, Mother has covered approximately 35 percent of Ye-lu's surface with various structures but this percentage ebbs and flows depending on what she has been asked to do and what she is working on independently.

The naval staff are present at Ye-lu in a primarily scientific role. They are there to guide and monitor Mother's activities in order to determine if her advanced technology can be applied elsewhere. If things go well, more automation at Imperial military facilities could become the norm.

SHIPWRECK HUNTERS

The Sylean Main has been travelled by starships for thousands of years. It was a provincial route for the Vilani, a major artery into the First Imperium for Terran conquerors, the site of numerous battles during the Sylean Federation-Interstellar Confederacy War and now hosts the Core's most valuable trade route. Over the millennia, hundreds of ships on the route have been lost during battles, wilderness refuelling operations gone wrong, misjumps and other calamities. Celebrity shipwreck hunters ply the route searching these old hulks for salvage and adventure. The few dozen that have been found have captured the public's imagination. Imperial citizens are fascinated with their long, complicated histories and a great deal of excitement and media attention surrounds the discovery of each old wreck. Holovideo documentaries about newly discovered wrecks are among the most popular entertainments available in the Core and each new discovery is like opening a time capsule from various eras of Imperial history.

Perhaps the most famous of these lost ships, and one that has yet to be found, is the *Regal Voyager*, a 50,000-ton cruiser commanded by Interstellar Confederacy war hero, Beau-Ta-Quitala. A noble from Keplo, the daring and handsome Beau-Ta-Quitala was the warrior-sage of his era. Legends tend to grow out of proportion with reality over time but the historical record speaks for itself. He was a brilliant academic with a doctorate in jumpspace engineering, a savvy politician and a warfighting capital ship captain. Beau-Ta-Quitala and all hands of the *Regal Voyager* were lost in action 1,300 years ago while travelling from Keplo to Sketola where the heroic captain was to engage in a final showdown with the rebel leader, Baron Rolf von Toerbach of Protalus.

There are many mysterious theories about Beau-Ta-Quitala's disappearance, some quite outlandish, but few solid clues as to where his famous starship may have ended up. Most people believe it must have misjumped somewhere into the Bunkeria-Cemplas Gap, the stellar chasm between the two subsectors. If anyone were to find the lost ship, fame and fortune beyond imagination would surely follow.

CHANT

The Chant subsector currently has a population of about 13.7 billion. At its peak, it had over 14 times that. Chant has been continuously settled for over 7,000 years dating back to the original Vilani expansion into the Core but over the millennia, ecological collapse, war and the effects of the Long Night decimated its worlds. The remnants of lost civilisations are everywhere, in particular at Merat and Avthaus where sprawling Vilani ruins sit side-by-side with the structures of the modern Imperium. On Effinity, the deserts and equatorial marshes have reclaimed the ruins and new cities have sprung up in the temperate latitudes to take their place.

Some have compared Chant to the picked over remains of a long-dead carcass. Others call it 'the sick man of the Core'. Its resources have been plundered for thousands of years and it has been a bloody battlefield more times than anyone cares to remember. Perhaps the greatest killer of all was the Plague of Duskir, the slew of Terran diseases that wiped out billions of Vilani.

With its population in freefall and its economy in tatters, things have certainly been better for Chant. Nevertheless, there is reason for hope. While Chant is a shadow of its former self, there are signs of a resurgence. The subsector retains several of its Class A and B starports, propped up by Imperial subsidies. Industrial worlds Skeen and Raami, two of the oldest civilisations in the sector, have pledged to revitalise Chant. The Achenaar Antilles Line has opened up a hub at Anther from which they have plans to reinvigorate trade on the trailing spur of the Sylean Main. Emperor Strephon himself has invested a portion of his personal wealth in the region and solicited trillions more from the megacorporations. As far as the Emperor is concerned, it simply will not do to have an economic disaster of this scale on Capital's doorstep.

Chant is defended by the Imperial Navy's 2nd Fleet, which consists of only three squadrons. The ships of the 2nd are outdated, underfunded and desperately in need of a refit. Fortunately, the fleet has more than its share of auxiliary spacecraft, many of which are dealing with a burgeoning piracy problem in the rimward portion of the subsector. The Imperial Navy normally takes a heavy hand against pirates but because Chant is so close to Capital, they are addressing the problem with a lighter touch. That such a thing as piracy could even occur so close to the throne world is an embarrassment and if word were to get out to the greater Imperium, it would be a public relations nightmare. Piracy results from economic strife and the Imperium hopes to rejuvenate Chant's ailing worlds. While the navy is not averse to using force, they are attempting to win hearts and minds instead. They hope to provide viable alternatives for those who have turned to piracy.

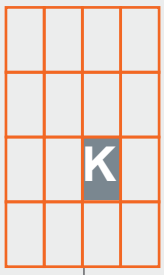
There is no single reason for the severe decline of the rimward worlds. There are many factors that have contributed to their fall but corruption, nepotism and cronyism are by far the greatest culprits. Astrography plays a part as well with the region being surrounded by several small- to mid-sized stellar gaps, which impede the flow of information and make for a spotty economy. Chant is also bordered on its rimward flank by the Chanestin worlds, which are isolationist and therefore rarely trade with outsiders.

The future of Chant is very much in question. Relief has begun to flow in from external sources but the subsector has more than its share of kleptocrats who misappropriate funds and redirect them to their own coffers. It will require more than just the good will of the Emperor to save Chant from plummeting even further into decline.

ANTHER

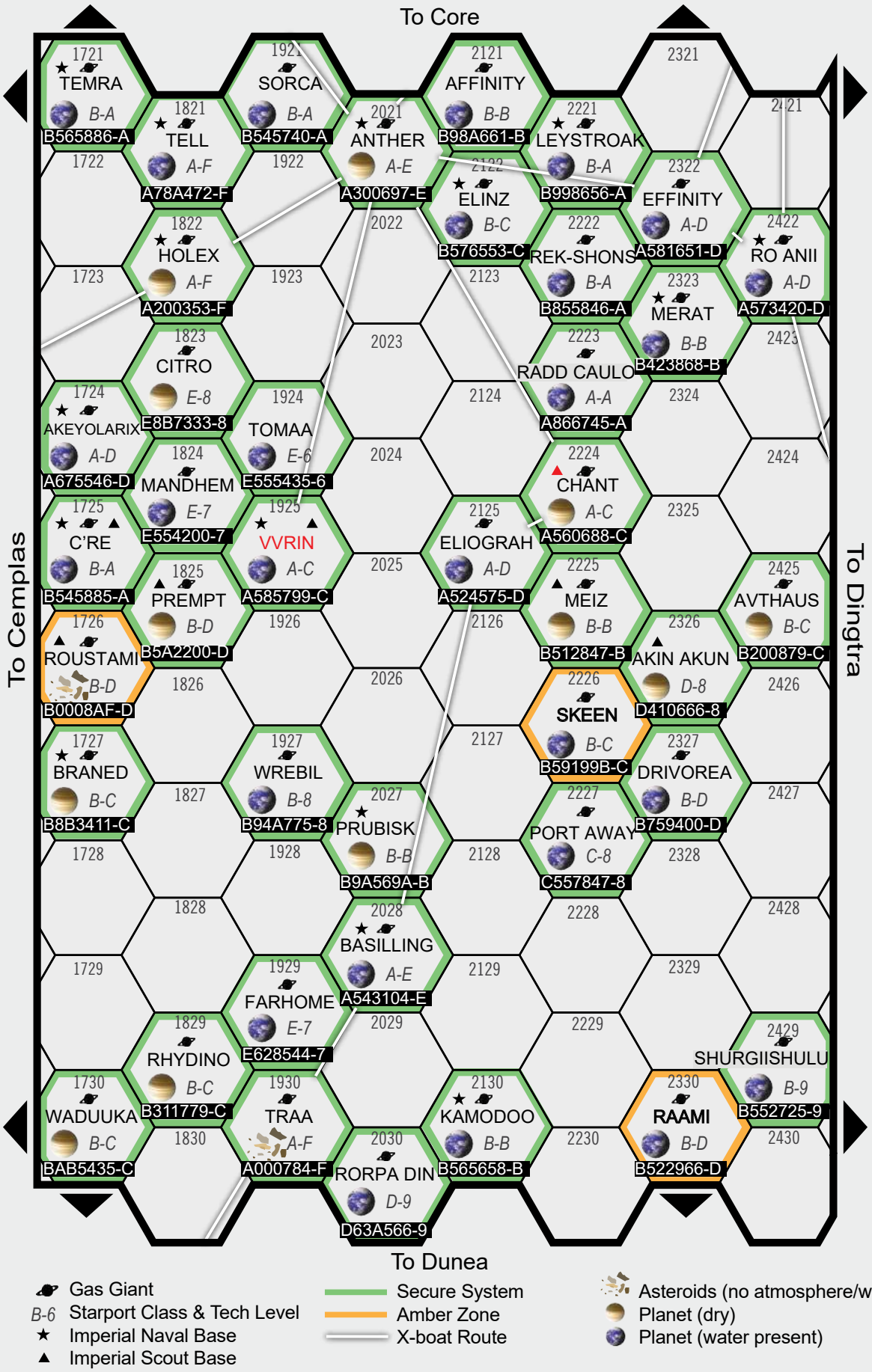
Anther is a vacuum world on the coreward periphery of Chant. The system has poor resources but is strategically located on the Sylean Main and has five gas giants, which makes wilderness refuelling easy for visiting Travellers. The system primary is an orange subgiant, an immense star that has begun its long transformation process along the red-giant branch. While Anther is a small world, it is theorised that it once had a trace atmosphere and liquid water that evaporated away as its primary grew in size.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Affinity	2121		B98A661-B	Ni Ri Wa		G
Akeyolarix	1724	N	A675546-D	Ag Ht Ni		G
Akin Akun	2326	S	D410666-8	Na Ni		
Anther	2021	N	A300697-E	Ht Na Ni Va		G
Avthaus	2425		B200879-C	Ht Na Va		G
Basilling	2028	N	A543104-E	Ht Lo Po		G
Braned	1727	N	B8B3411-C	Fl Ht Ni		G
C're	1725	N S	B545885-A			G
Chant	2224	W	A560688-C	De Ht Ni Ri		G
Citro	1823		E8B7333-8	Fl Lo		G
Drivorea	2327		B759400-D	Ht Ni		G
Effinity	2322		A581651-D	Ht Ni Ri		G
Elinz	2122	N S	B576553-C	Ag Ht Ni		
Eliograh	2125		A524575-D	Ht Ni		G
Farhome	1929		E628544-7	Ni		G
Holex	1822	N	A200353-F	Ht Lo Va		G
Kamodoo	2130	N	B565658-B	Ag Ni Ri		G
Leystroak	2221	N	B998656-A	Ag Ni		G
Mandhem	1824		E554200-7	Lo		G
Meiz	2225	S	B512847-B	Ic Na		G
Merat	2323	N	B423868-B	Na Po		G
Port Away	2227		C557847-8			G
Prempt	1825	S	B5A2200-D	Fl Ht Lo		G
Prubisk	2027	N	B9A569A-B	Fl Ni		
Raami	2330		B522966-D	Hi Ht In Na Po	A	G
Radd Caulo	2223		A866745-A	Ag Ga Ri		G
Rek-shons	2222		B855846-A	Ga		G
Rhydino	1829		B311779-C	Ht Ic Na		G
Ro Anii	2422	N	A573420-D	Ht Ni		G
Rorpa Din	2030		D63A566-9	Ni Wa		G
Roustami	1726	S	B0008AF-D	As Ht Na Va	A	G
Shurgiishulu	2429		B552725-9	Po		G
Skeen	2226		B59199B-C	Hi Ht In	A	G
Sorca	1921		B545740-A	Ag		G
Tell	1821	N	A78A472-F	Ht Ni Wa		G
Temra	1721	N	B565886-A	Ri		G
Tomaa	1924		E555435-6	Ni		
Traa	1930		A000784-F	As Ht Na Va		G
Vvrin	1925	NS	A585799-C	Ag Ht Ri		
Waduuka	1730		BAB5435-C	Fl Ht Ni		G
Wrebil	1927		B94A775-8	Wa		G



CORE

CHANT SUBSECTOR



As the nexus of no fewer than six trade and communications routes, Anther is ground zero for the Chant Subsector Rejuvenation Project (CSRP). Its starport was recently upgraded to a sterling Class A facility, complete with cutting-edge shipyard and the best maintenance facilities in the subsector. The highport is a large facility, befitting its enviable location along the trade routes. The downport and adjacent startown are modern, aesthetically attractive towers with disc-like landing platforms and enclosed docking bays. Residential and hospitality facilities are contained in domes at the bases of each tower. Even before the upgrades to its facilities, Anther experienced a high volume of traffic and things have gotten noticeably better since the work was completed. Unfortunately, most ships are just passing through and that is a problem. People currently see Chant as a 'highway' of sorts, an obstacle to get through to reach more lucrative markets elsewhere. The Imperium wants to see more traffic going rimward where the benefits of trade might revitalise the subsector's fortunes.

The CSRP has two key roles: economic evangelism and public relations, both of which are to be achieved by teams of administrators who flit about to the other worlds of Chant. The evangelism component seeks to entice the trader community to travel off the beaten path and go to worlds they might otherwise ignore. The public relations component consists of 'Outrider' teams, which go to the underserved systems of Chant and help them to become more attractive markets. Getting these systems to cooperate is often more difficult than one might think. The people of backwater worlds can become accustomed to their limited prospects and are often leery of offworlders who come to promise them a brighter future.

CSRP agents are frequently encountered while travelling through Chant, providing incentives for Travellers to take the rimward route to the subsector's less-developed systems. Unfortunately, not all CSRP employees have Chant's best interests in mind. As with many well-funded bureaucracies, corruption is an ever-present problem. CSRP accounts have been raided by embezzlers and hackers, many of whom have been given back-door access by insiders. While the problem has not yet gotten out of hand, if it gets much worse, it will begin to have a deleterious effect on the agency's efforts. High-level officers at CSRP headquarters have been tasked with addressing the issue.

ALMA SANTOLUCIO

Alma is a humourless bureaucrat whose job it is to ferret out corruption and expose it to higher-ups in the Imperial Justice Department so they may seek out offenders and prosecute them. Alma might encounter the Travellers at Anther or another busy port in the Chant subsector, where she will request a working or basic passage aboard their starship provided that they are travelling rimward towards the more troubled worlds. Alma is a determined, if inexperienced, auditor/detective and could use the Travellers' help seeking out those who misappropriate Imperial funds. She is a bit of a blunderer and more than a little naïve, and is therefore likely to run into all sorts of trouble, mostly along the lines of offending dangerous people who would just as soon not have illegal activities exposed.

ALMA SANTOLUCIO, IMPERIAL AUDITOR

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	Female	—

TRAITS				— SKILLS
STR	5	INT	9	Admin 2, Advocate 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Investigation 1, Persuade 1, Profession (accounting) 2, Streetwise 0, Vacc Suit 0
DEX	6	EDU	11	
END	8	SOC	8	

EQUIPMENT	Hand Computer, Decryptor (TL12) **Armour:** Tailored Vacc Suit (+8)

CHANT

Chant has an unusual ecology that exists mostly underground in and around its extensive aquifers and underground reservoirs. These resources support thousands of troglodytic animal species, mosses and fungi, most of which never see the light of day. The majority of desert worlds have little in the way of atmosphere but Chant's plant species employ photosynthesis to provide one that is 28 percent oxygen, 71 percent nitrogen with trace amounts of carbon dioxide and other gases. The plants wind their way upward through Chant's porous crust to the surface where they protrude with large flowering surfaces to absorb the light of Ami, the system's orange main sequence star. Chant has a slow rotation of 196.2 hours, making the local day well over a standard week long. Photosynthesis on Chant is based on retinal instead of chlorophyll, so most plants are purple, lavender and sometimes pink. Whichever side of the planet faces Ami is covered in flowering plant life, while on the dark side the plants retract into the earth to drink from its subterranean water sources. The higher oxygen level means that things catch fire more easily and burn longer. Lightning strikes from Chant's eerie 'dry storms' burn desiccated plant life, creating sprawling wildfires that can last for weeks and are part of the planet's cycle of life and death.

The sensitive ecology of the planet has been preserved due to a lack of large-scale exploitation. Chant has only small reserves of precious metals and has never been heavily colonised. Wave after wave of settlers skipped over the world, most of whom moved on to resource-rich Skeen and Raami. Chant is currently home to nine million inhabitants, most of whom farm its unusual and resilient flowering plants for export into foreign markets. The Duke of Chant has a home on this world but spends the majority of his time three parsecs away at Vvrin, the subsector capital, or at Capital, where he is an active participant in Moot deliberations.

Chant Downport is a high-quality but austere facility, designed to accommodate diplomatic visitors to the duke's estate and tourists who come to roam the world's deserts. The downport has only a few docking bays and is not equipped to handle large amounts of traffic. The Scout Service has a small administrative office on-planet, which sometimes hosts members of the Exploration branch who come to study the local flora and fauna. The shipyard and port authority are both located at the highport, a large facility that they share with the Scout Service way station. In addition to serving the needs of the Communications Branch, the way station also includes administrative offices where retired scouts come to pick up their Type-S scout/couriers. These ships are rarely given without also assigning a detached duty mission. There is plenty of work to be done in the subsector and retired scouts make an excellent auxiliary work force.

Chant's low-key government is primarily concerned with the preservation and maintenance of the world's delicate ecological balance but also manages the Civilian Service Bureau, an agency that provides services for the world's nine million inhabitants.

FARHOME

Farhome is one of the failing worlds of the rimward cluster, evidenced by its poor starport quality, declining population and low Tech Level. This world was the site of a Solomani Colony that collapsed during the Long Night and a second colony that was established in 667. The second go-around got off to a fair to middling start, exploiting the untapped resources of both the mainworld and the system's two planetoid belts. In more recent times, poor planning and subsequent financial struggles have slowly and painfully choked any prospects for success that the colony might have had. While some still eke out a decent living in the belts, those on the mainworld have become destitute. Most have eventually found a way off of Farhome but some descendants of the original colonists remain, living out a bleak and seemingly pointless existence.

If there is a silver lining to Farhome's dark cloud, it is its invention of a musical style called altDirge. It is performed by a live band, usually with three to five musicians and always includes a bass drum, a high-pitched horn similar to the Terran suona and an accordion. A snare drum and acoustic guitar are usually included to complete the quintet with the accordion or guitar player at lead vocals. The lyrics of altDirge songs are about depressing things like the deaths of loved ones, barren worlds, financial ruin and unrequited love. The sensation has caught on at the

Port Away and Rorpa Din systems as well. Top bands tour the interstellar region, making a decent living and raising awareness of the struggles of their respective homeworlds. The altDirge band No Prospects is currently making waves with the political protest song, 'Take it as it comes', which draws attention to the fact that some of their people have turned to piracy out of desperation. The song rather bluntly blames corrupt Imperial bureaucrats for their suffering.

TRAA

Traa has been mined by belters for thousands of years and its asteroids have been almost completely tapped of their precious metals. Most mining activity now occurs on the other planets and gas giant moons of the system where prospecting and extraction is more difficult. Traa is off the beaten path of the rimward main by one parsec, so its government has found other ways to make it a worthwhile destination. Its dozens of hollowed out asteroids, once home to millions of belters, have been converted for recreational use and now host myriad artificial habitats including zoos, spas, environmental simulations, amusement parks, urban settings with fine dining and opportunities for social interaction and 'pleasure asteroids', which promise experiences beyond Travellers' wildest dreams. Vacationers from industrial Raami and Skeen are frequent visitors.

The starport is housed in Kala-an-Vodi, Traa's largest planetoid. Its high-tech shipyard only manufactures civilian spacecraft and is known for producing many custom designs. Its financial success has garnered the interest of investors including the megacorporation GSbAG, which has purchased a minority stake. Imperial authorities have expressed concern about the shipyard's willingness to install all manner of weaponry, stealth coatings and other typically military features on so-called civilian starships but has thus far resisted the temptation to intervene. The economy of the rimward main is already in a state of deep economic depression and the Imperium is reluctant to upset the applecart.

WREBIL

Wrebil was once the site of an extensive psionic training institute, which was grooming psionic aides to serve high nobles. Initiates in the programme were the cream of the crop, selected from thousands of candidates within the Core. The group trained at a secure facility known as 'the Keep', located on a high seamount in the world's northern hemisphere. When the Psionic Suppressions occurred, the group resisted dissolution and incarceration, resulting in a bloody confrontation with a battalion of Imperial Marine lift infantry troops. Despite being unarmed and unarmoured, the psionics gave as they received, using their abilities to take out dozens of marines during the assault.

In an effort to ingratiate themselves with the locals, initiates from the Keep were regularly parcelled out to members of Wrebil's ruling bureaucracy, where they made themselves invaluable members of Wrebilian society. When the marines came down from the heavens and the Keep was destroyed, it caused a great deal of unrest and ultimately resulted in the dissolution of the government. Wrebil split up into factional governments, some of which were pro-Imperial and some adamantly against them. Grievances were settled over time and the anti-Imperial nations have simply become more isolationist while the pro-Imperial ones have sought more involvement from the interstellar community.

Of note, several of the psions at the Keep escaped the attack aboard a deep sea submarine. The marines were unable to pursue beyond 100 metres of depth in their assault craft but did manage to fire weapons at the submarine and claimed that it was destroyed. Conspiracy theories abound that the psions actually escaped and resumed their roles helping Wrebil to govern its society and that the balkanised nations of the world are a ruse to put off the Imperium. There are also rumours that the master of the Keep, an über-talented psion by the name of Marak Ilyaman, has been able to use a unique Awareness talent to maintain his youth, thereby making him immortal. Allegedly he continues to lead and teach psions from a secret training facility, far beneath the water world's ocean surface.

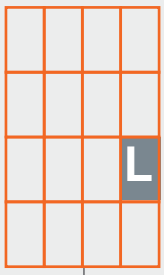
DINGTRA

All but one world in Dingtra has retained its original Vilani name; Glimmer, which is probably just a corruption of Gimuur Luu, its former (also Vilani) name. Many of these worlds were cut off from one another during the Long Night but the jump-1 cluster in the rimward portion of the subsector managed to maintain limited contact via a fleet of light freighters and escorts that had belonged to Sharurshid, the venerable Vilani megacorporation. These worlds did not have the resources to become a pocket empire after the Rule of Man fell but limited contact enabled them to save populations that would have otherwise perished.

The spirit of cooperation lives on in Dingtra, where its four industrial worlds provide goods for the entire subsector. In fact, it has more industrial output than it actually needs because Dingtra has few easily accessible foreign markets. To coreward, the Chasma Sylea Major blocks easy transit. The subsectors to both spinward and trailing are underdeveloped, have relatively small populations and are not attractive to most traders. To rimward is the Saregon subsector, which has four industrial worlds of its own, far more people and a more aggressive culture that bullies Dingtra into submission. There are bold traders who make the long circuit into Fornast and back but by and large Dingtra is an insular subsector more focused on maintaining what it has than trying to become something it is not. In short, Dingtra has not strayed far from its conservative Vilani heritage. Visitors to Dingtra sometimes jokingly refer to it as 'The land that the Third Imperium forgot'.

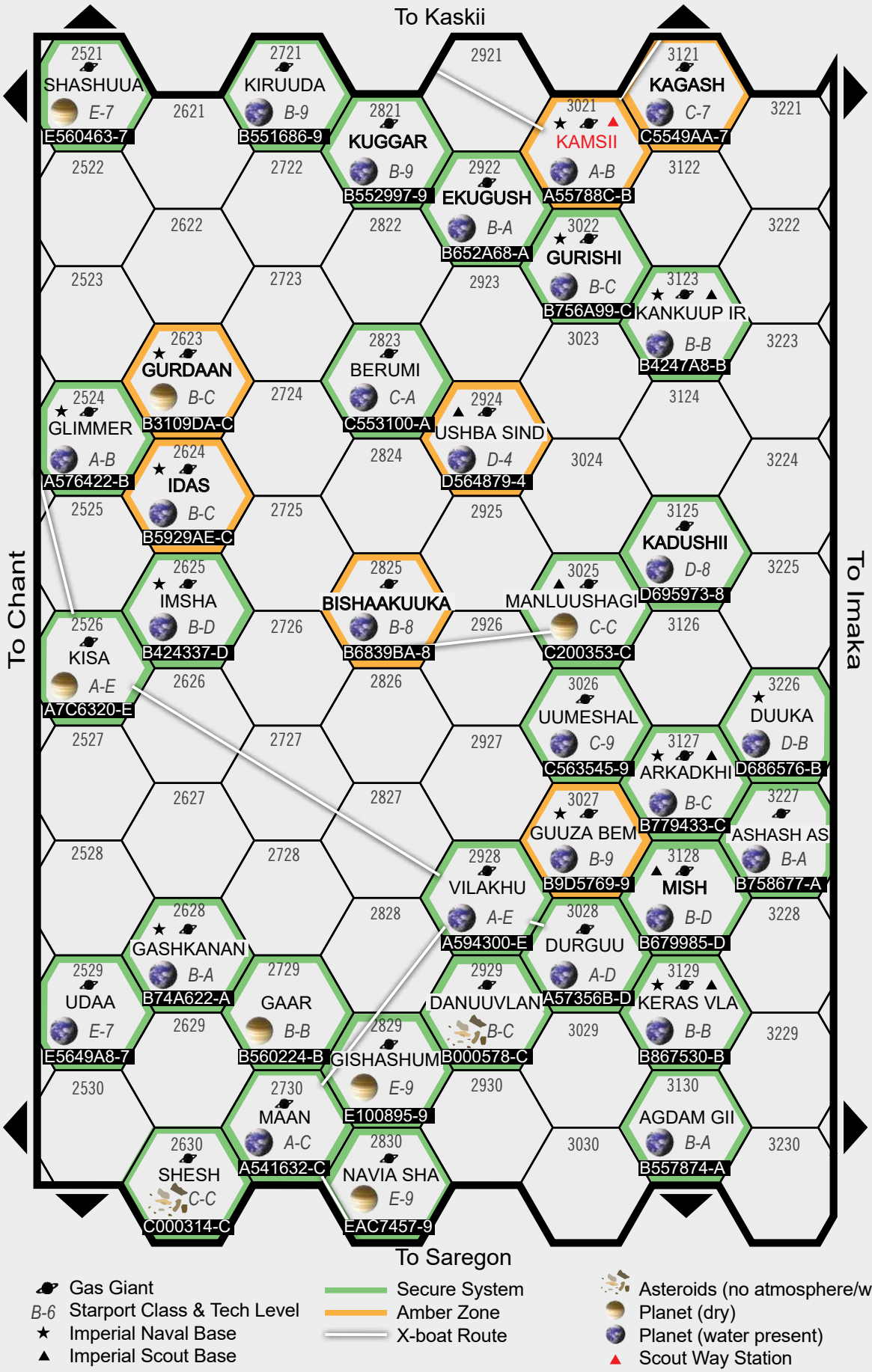
With more resources and industrial output than it needs, Dingtraians have an adequate but not exorbitant standard of living. Both the labour and professional castes work hard at their jobs and can expect to take a family vacation once every few

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Agdam Gii	3130		B557874-A			
Arkadkhi	3127	N S	B779433-C	Ht Ni		G
Ashash As	3227		B758677-A	Ag Ni		G
Berumi	2823		C553100-A	Lo Po		G
Bishaakuuka	2825		B6839BA-8	Hi	A	G
Danuuvlan	2929		B000578-C	As Ht Ni Va		G
Durguu	3028		A57356B-D	Ht Ni		G
Duuka	3226	N	B686576-B	Ag Ga Ni		
Ekugush	2922		B652A68-A	Hi Po		G
Gaar	2729		B560224-B	De Lo		
Gashkanan	2628	N	B74A622-A	Ni Wa		G
Gishashum	2829		E100895-9	Na Va		G
Glimmer	2524	N	A576422-B	Ni		G
Gurdaan	2623	N	B3109DA-C	Hi Ht In Na	A	G
Gurishi	3022	N	B756A99-C	Ga Hi Ht		G
Guuza Bem	3027	N	B9D5769-9		A	G
Idas	2624	N	B5929AE-C	Hi Ht In	A	G
Imsha	2625	N	B424337-D	Ht Lo		G
Kadushii	3125	S	D695973-8	Hi In		G
Kagash	3121		C5549AA-7	Hi	A	G
Kamsii	3021	N W	A55788C-B		A	G
Kankuup Ir	3123	N S	B4247A8-B			G
Keras Vla	3129	N S	B867530-B	Ag Ga Ni		G
Kiruuda	2721		B551686-9	Ni Po		G
Kisa	2526		A7C6320-E	Fl Ht Lo		G
Kuggar	2821		B552997-9	Hi Po		G
Maan	2730		A541632-C	Ht Ni Po		G
Manluushagi	3025	S	C200353-C	Ht Lo Va		G
Mish	3128	S	B679985-D	Hi Ht In		G
Navla Sha	2830		EAC7457-9	Fl Ni		G
Shashuua	2521		E560463-7	De Ni		G
Shesh	2630		C000314-C	As Ht Lo Va		G
Udaa	2529		E5649A8-7	Hi		G
Ushba Sind	2924	S	D564879-4	Lt Ri	A	G
Uumeshal	3026		C563545-9	Ni		G
Vilakhu	2928		A594300-E	Ht Lo		G



CORE

DINGTRA SUBSECTOR



years either at Kamsii the 'pleasure planet' or another suitable world in the subsector. In addition, most Dingtraian societies are members of one traditional Vilani religion or another with almost no Solomani-inspired faiths among them.

Offworlders often find Dingtraians to be aloof or perhaps even a bit hostile. With the exception of Kadushii, all of Dingtra's high-population worlds have high Law Levels, showing their preference for strict, orderly societies. Unfortunately, it also reflects intolerance towards foreigners. Dingtraians do not much care for behaviour that strays outside the norm and Travellers to Dingtra's high-population worlds often get into trouble with law enforcement officers. For this reason, most of these worlds have been given Amber Zone designations. Dingtraian justice is harsh and the court system often assigns long prison sentences for petty infractions. However, Dingtra is after all a part of the Imperium and usually commutes sentences provided that foreign diplomats intercede on an incarcerated Traveller's behalf. Commuted sentences are usually accompanied by deportation and a lifetime expulsion from the system where the 'crime' occurred.

Dingtra is defended by the squadrons of the Imperial Navy's 274th Fleet, which maintains an alert if standoffish presence at the navy bases in the subsector. The Imperial credo is to protect the space between worlds without interfering in their affairs. Nowhere is this truer than Dingtra where the navy maintains a distinctly separate existence from the locals. While citizens of the subsector do serve in the navy and other military services, most do so without distinction from their respective worlds. Imperial service is neither celebrated nor reviled but merely looked upon as a necessity for membership in the empire.

There is a flipside to that Imperial creed; systems under the Imperium's protection must abide by its laws and must not move to restrict free trade. Dingtra appears to have a problem with the latter. So little commerce moves into and out of the subsector that the Imperium has become wary. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the subsector nobility to ensure that the worlds under their purview are adhering to the rules but even they have run into trouble penetrating the monolithic Dingtraian culture. Sharurshid maintains an ominous presence in Dingtra and may well be propping up a 'shadow monopoly' in which the megacorporation and its shell companies hold all the cards. Imperial inspectors sent to investigate the situation have all too frequently 'run afoul of the law' and subsequently found themselves serving time in a gulag. The Imperium is attempting to resolve the problem without making too heavy a play. The age of orbital bombardment and planetary 'cleansings' has long passed and officials hope to find a diplomatic solution. Recently they have begun to make inroads with some of the less-populated worlds of the subsector, specifically those which have less authoritarian governments.

IDAS

Idas is a full-fledged technologically reinforced police state that severely limits all aspects of its citizen's lives. Idasians are never allowed to leave the system and interstellar travel is limited to high-ranking members of the Ruling Council and the Sovereign himself, and then only with an oversized force of security officers. Council members are fitted with augments that enable them to communicate with one another using an encrypted neural network. Most communication is done sub-vocally, thereby enabling them to speak with each other in a virtually telepathic fashion. All conversations are recorded and analysed by data algorithms designed to spot rebellious thinking and nip such behaviour in the bud wherever it may exist. The augments are also fitted with brainwave suppressors that can be used by the Sovereign and high-ranking members of the secret police to render an individual unconscious or – in extreme cases – given a painful and fatal cerebral aneurism.

The Sovereign of Idas serves as the world's executive authority and is allegedly selected under the advisement of the Ruling Council. In fact, the role is solely appointed by the previous Sovereign – usually a male blood relative – but the ruse is propped up to convey the illusion that the Council has more power than it actually does. Upon selection, the Sovereign is ritually blinded and has his eyes replaced with cybernetic ones that supposedly enable him to see into the souls of his subjects. In fact, these glowing red eyes are the least sophisticated augments given to the dictator. After the ritual, the Sovereign disappears from public view for a few months, during which time a full array of TL14–15 augments are surgically implanted at a world with the desired technology on hand. With the sophisticated and highly specialised augments, he can indeed detect a great deal about those with whom he communicates, including whether or not they are telling the truth and whether they are favourably disposed towards the Sovereign.

Idas' roughly one billion citizens are equipped with internal devices at birth that track their whereabouts and record all of their experiences into a sprawling data substrate. These recordings are rarely accessed by law enforcement but the mere knowledge that they exist keeps most Idasians in fearful compliance. In addition, Idas likes to apply authoritarianism with a personal touch. All of its arcologies are panopticons, circular structures whose buildings are observable by a central listening and viewing post. With the technology available, the Idasian security apparatchik could perform all surveillance unobtrusively but, for whatever the reason, they prefer the populace to be acutely aware that they are being watched. Besides the secret police and intrusive surveillance technology, the people are controlled by the twin pillars of the Free Party of Idas and the Indenturate, a quasi-religious authority that harbours the belief that achieving perfection in one's works shall set them free in the afterlife. This afterlife is not spiritual but technological. After a life of labour, the sum total of one's recorded experiences are assembled as a unique identity and set free in a virtual world where none of the trappings of authoritarianism exist. Idasians spend copious amounts of their spare time editing out the experiences they would just as soon forget from their personal data troves, in preparation for the blissful experience that awaits them in a digital afterlife.

While TL12 is formidable, there is certainly higher technology to be had in the Imperium. The security apparatus on Idas is acutely aware of this fact and spends a great deal of its time worrying about 'infections' by higher technology. They are desperately afraid of what might happen should rebellious members of society – rare as those may be – obtain technology that enables them to thwart Idasian safeguards and expose the lies that prop up the ruling authorities. There are rumours of an insurgent organisation known simply as 'The Anarchy' that seeks to do just that, although no actual proof of their existence has been found.

While the world is not interdicted, Travellers are advised to restrict themselves to the highport, downport and the rather pedestrian startown. Delving into Idasian society is not recommended as visitors have a bad habit of disappearing without ever being seen or heard from again.

KAMSII

Kamsii is a pleasure planet, with virtually all of its land masses and much of its seas devoted to providing entertainment for millions of visitors. Amusement parks, nature preserves, zoos, ocean cruises, immersive virtual reality experiences and just about any other entertainment that one can imagine is available on Kamsii.

Kamsii is the subsector capital and the Ducal Offices are there but the Duchess of Dingtra actually spends little time on the world. The ruling family of Kamsii are descendants of Solomani who conquered the world during the Interstellar Wars. A patriarch or matriarch of the family is assigned the nominal role of count or countess but rarely do they use this appellation. Along with their apparent distaste for the terminology of noble lineage, the family controls Kamsii as if it were a city state within Imperial confines. They maintain their own sublight planetary navy, which patrols close orbit all the way out to the 100-diameter limit. There is both an Imperial Navy base and scout way station but neither has a presence on Kamsii itself. Both are located in orbital space stations and on the surfaces of other worlds in the system.

Kamsii is also the site of sizeable Hiver, Droyne and most recently K'kree enclaves. While these are ostensibly tourist attractions of a sort, the government is careful to nurture relationships with each of them in an effort to prevent their inhabitants from feeling like exhibits in a zoo.

USHBA SIND

During the Interstellar Wars, Ushba Sind fell under the jurisdiction of a Terran Navy sublieutenant who designated the world as a wildlife refuge for numerous animal species found throughout Dingtra. He noticed that Vilani exploitation had resulted in mass extinctions on many of its worlds and was determined to reverse the damage. His successors never managed to replenish the worlds of Dingtra with species that had gone extinct but they did convert Ushba Sind into a 'Noah's Ark' of sorts, with thousands of alien animals transplanted to its surface. Ushba Sind itself had no native life forms of its own but thousands of years of soil treatment and the application of other terraforming techniques had transformed the world into a viable home for a broad range of plants and animals.

The modern Ushba Sindi people are the inheritors of this conservationist approach. There are strict Vilani-style laws in place that protect the world's artificial habitats and severely limit the use of land for agricultural purposes. There is essentially just enough farmland to support the planet's 400 million sophonts with the remainder reserved for the animals. Where possible, these disparate groups of animals have been united into shared habitats, effectively creating new ecosystems out of groups of animals that have evolved on different worlds. Centuries of experimentation has resulted in a carefully cultivated balance. By the mid-350s, this arrangement had settled into a patchwork of separate governments, each of which was responsible for a distinct ecosystem. Unfortunately, nature has a way of expanding beyond its prescribed borders and some ecosystems expanded into others of their own volition. More often than not, this was not caused by human intervention but it nonetheless resulted in conflict. The Ushba Sindi possess no high-tech weaponry but brushfire wars between militias began to occur. Members of the Scout Service Exploration Branch were sent to the system in 752 to help remedy the situation. The scouts established an orbital supply depot and a ground base and worked with the Ushba Sindi to apply unobtrusive but high-tech solutions in order to carefully manage and prevent the encroachment of habitats on each other or – where possible – arrange for habitats to combine. When performing the latter, the scouts have also had to carefully merge their respective governments. There are 14 distinct habitats and associated governments remaining on Ushba Sind. The ultimate goal is to combine all of them into one worldwide ecosystem and government but there are many challenges to overcome before that would be possible and achieving this objective is expected to take many years.

The Ushba Sindi are decidedly low tech but have learned to use technology for the betterment of society. Sometime in the last century, they began to import a pharmaceutical treatment from Brangwen in nearby Fornast, which enables users to develop animal empathy. Users can customise the treatment to alter one's nervous system and that of an associated animal so the two species develop an emotional connection. This has enabled the Ushba Sindi to have an unusually close association with their animals whose needs they can then serve more effectively. Use of the treatments is widespread and has resulted in a noticeable societal change in which the Ushba Sindi see themselves less as citizens of various nations and more associated with the residential or migratory nature of the various species to whom they have become pharmaceutically linked. The scouts are closely monitoring these changes and are prepared to intervene as necessary.

While Ushba Sind is not an interdicted world, access to its surface is restricted and Travellers must typically go through a lengthy application process before they are allowed to visit. The Scout Service have set up an array of security satellites to prevent unlawful landings. The Duke of Kamsii has been known to expedite the application process for those who prove that their visit to the world is for altruistic purposes. Select traders have also been given access to the planet but they are usually limited to the market zone of Ushba Sind's austere downport.

CADION

Cadion has multiple clusters of worlds that are divided by gaps of two or three parsecs, preventing the bulk of them from forming cohesive political and commercial communities. There are three or four distinct clusters of stars – depending on how they are grouped – and one outlier in the Night system. Imperial astrocartographers refer to subsectors like Cadion as 'assistive', meaning that their disparate clusters seem less associated with one another and more with those of outlying subsectors. While gaps of three parsecs are by no means insurmountable, most trading ships and freighters have jump ratings of 1 or 2. However, communications are carried by the x-boat network, which is standardised at jump-4, so the worlds of Cadion do remain in communication with one another.

The cluster to spinward-coreward, which includes the Cadion system itself, contains the rimward spur of the Sylean Main. Not all traders who ply the main come all the way to Cadion before turning back to Capital but those who do have the option of continuing onward to the densely populated Shardi Cluster in neighbouring Dagudashaag. Naasirka has recently made Reel a regional R&D and manufacturing hub, which has made the long journey to the spur worthwhile for merchants who want to obtain the megacorporation's popular high-tech products.

The spinward-rimward (lower left) corner of Cadion also contains worlds that are linked to the Shardi Cluster but these are not considered part of the Sylean Main due to the fact that to reach them by jump-1 transit, one must first delve into Dagudashaag. This cluster also contains Reference, the central repository of Imperial knowledge and administrative headquarters of the IISS. Reference is heavily defended by Imperial Navy and Scout Service spacecraft but civilian traffic is strictly limited there for security reasons.

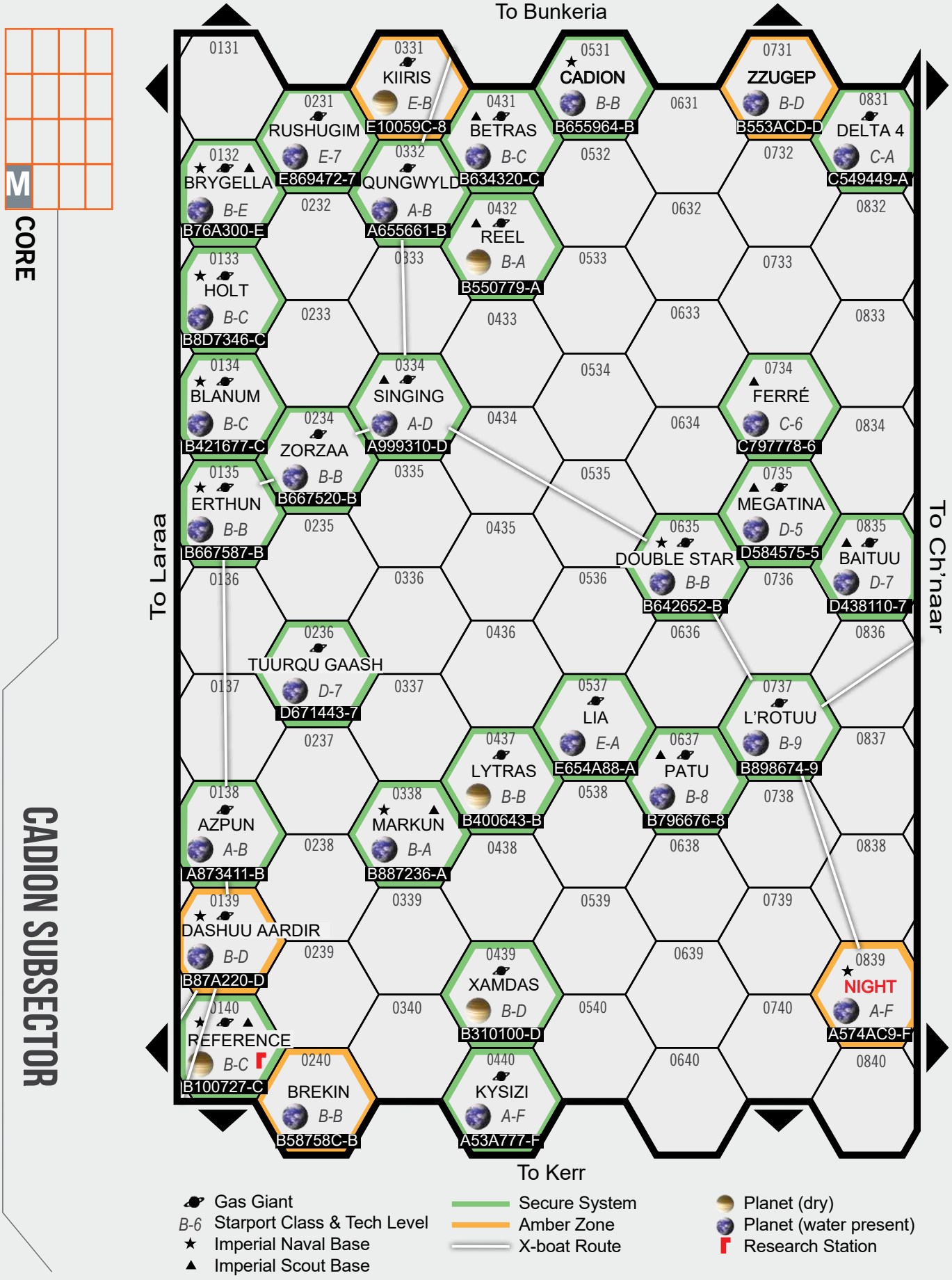
Located in the central chasm of Cadion, the Lia and Double Star Clusters are seldom visited by traders and only one system among them, L'rotuu, has planetoid belts and is therefore the only system to attract belters. Sharurshid has sponsored subsidised merchant routes in each cluster to explore their economic potential and has even installed a deep space refuelling depot in the empty space between Double Star, Lia and Patu for those merchants who want to explore both regions. The jury is still out on whether there are enough Credits to be made on these underserved worlds. The majority of them are in rapid technological and population decline and resemble frontier colonies more than they do worlds of the Core. In addition, some have developed decidedly isolationist cultures and would rather be left alone. Nevertheless, these worlds are of strategic importance to the Imperium whose 210th Fleet is charged with defending the subsector. Stellar chasms pose a security concern and the squadrons of the fleet monitor the empty space between worlds as best they can. The navy bases at Double Star and Markun share the bulk of this duty. The remainder of Cadion's squadrons are based on its periphery and are tasked with defending its holdings from the troubled worlds of neighbouring sectors. In the galactic scheme of things, it was not all that long ago that the Imperium dealt with the Ilelish Revolt. The navy bases in this region were a major jumping-off point for the successful quashing of that separatist movement. The Emperor is leery of festering unrest in the other sectors and has instructed the navy to keep a watchful eye on events as they transpire.

By and large, the worlds of Cadion make up a free-wheeling, laissez-faire society. In comparison with other subsectors, there are few authoritarian governments present and most of its worlds have low Law Levels. Unlike most of Core, Cadion has the look and feel of the Imperial frontier.

BRYGELLA

Brygella has a complex oceanic biosphere that has been left largely undisturbed. The planet is almost completely covered with water and island land masses consume only three percent of its surface area. It is believed that Vilani nobles used the world, then called Lash, as an aquatic game-hunting preserve. The world was devoid of sophont populations during the Long Night and was only resettled during the early years of the Third Imperium. There is only one permanent habitation on the planet and that is at the prestigious Brygella School of Oceanography, a post-graduate university whose campus is entirely on artificial floating islands and underwater structures built on its seamounts.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Azpun	0138		A873411-B	Ni		G
Baituu	0835	S	D438110-7	Lo		G
Betras	0431	S	B634320-C	Ht Lo		G
Blanum	0134	N	B421677-C	Ht Na Ni Po		G
Brekin	0240		B58758C-B	Ag Ni	A	
Brygella	0132	N S	B76A300-E	Ht Lo Wa		G
Cadion	0531	N	B655964-B	Ga Hi		
Dashuu Aardir	0139	N	B87A220-D	Ht Lo Wa	A	G
Delta 4	0831		C549449-A	Ni		G
Double Star	0635	N	B642652-B	Ni Po		G
Erthun	0135	N	B667587-B	Ag Ga Ni		G
Ferré	0734	S	C797778-6	Ag		
Holt	0133	N	B8D7346-C	Ht Lo		G
Kiiris	0331		E10059C-8	Ni Va	A	G
Kysizi	0440		A53A777-F	Ht Wa	Ht	G
L'rotuu	0737		B898674-9	Ag Ni		G
Lia	0537		E654A88-A	Hi		G
Lytras	0437		B400643-B	Na Ni Va		G
Markun	0338	N S	B887236-A	Ga Lo		
Megatina	0735	S	D584575-5	Ag Lt Ni		G
Night	0839	N	A574AC9-F	Hi Ht In	A	
Patu	0637	S	B796676-8	Ag Ni		G
Qungwyld	0332		A655661-B	Ag Ga Ni		G
Reel	0432	S	B550779-A	De Po		G
Reference	0140	N S	B100727-C	Na Ht Va		G
Rushugim	0231		E869472-7	Ni		G
Singing	0334	S	A999310-D	Ht Lo		G
Tuurqa Gaash	0236		D671443-7	Ni		G
Xamdas	0439		B310100-D	Ht Lo		G
Zorzaa	0234		B667520-B	Ag Ni		G
Zzugep	0731		B553ACD-D	Ga Hi Ht Po	A	


To Bunkeria
To Laraa
To Ch'naar
To Kerr
CORE
CADION SUBSECTOR
0131
0331
KIIRIS
E-B
E10059C-8
0531
CADION
B-B
B655964-B
0731
ZZUGEP
B-D
B553ACD-D
0231
RUSHUGIM
E-7
E869472-7
0431
BETRAS
B-C
B634320-C
0631
0831
DELTA 4
C-A
C549449-A
0132
BRYGELLA
B-E
B76A300-E
0332
QUNGWYLD
A-B
A655661-B
0532
0732
0232
0432
REEL
B-A
B550779-A
0632
0832
0133
HOLT
B-C
B8D7346-C
0333
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0733
0233
0433
0633
0833
0134
BLANUM
B-C
B421677-C
0334
SINGING
A-D
A999310-D
0534
0734
FERRÉ
C-6
C797778-6
0234
ZORZAA
B-B
B667520-B
0434
0634
0834
0135
ERTHUN
B-B
B667587-B
0335
0535
0735
MEGATINA
D-5
D584575-5
0235
0435
0635
DOUBLE STAR
B-B
B642652-B
0835
BAITUU
D-7
D438110-7
0136
0336
0536
0736
0236
TUURQU GAASH
D-7
D671443-7
0436
0636
0836
0137
0337
0537
LIA
E-A
E654A88-A
0737
L'ROTUU
B-9
B898674-9
0237
0437
LYTRAS
B-B
B400643-B
0637
PATU
B-8
B796676-8
0837
0138
AZPUN
A-B
A873411-B
0338
MARKUN
B-A
B887236-A
0538
0738
0238
0438
0638
0838
0139
DASHUU AARDIR
B-D
B87A220-D
0339
0539
0739
0239
0439
XAMDAS
B-D
B310100-D
0639
0839
NIGHT
A-F
A574AC9-F
0140
REFERENCE
B-C
B100727-C
0340
0540
0740
0240
BREKIN
B-B
B58758C-B
0440
KYSIZI
A-F
A53A777-F
0640
0840
Gas Giant
B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
Imperial Naval Base
Imperial Scout Base
Secure System
Amber Zone
X-boat Route
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)
Research Station

The Imperial Navy and Scout Service both maintain bases on the planet where they train personnel for aquatic operations. The use of all forms of seafaring vehicles is taught, as are scuba and underwater survival skills. Both services have annexes at the university where their personnel interact with the civilian staff and student population.

The highport is an automated, high-tech facility where visiting Travellers can refuel their ships. There is little in the way of infrastructure for commercial activity so merchants conduct trade outside the confines of the starport. Highport robots and small craft may be rented to help transfer cargo and freight. Permits to land at the downport are arranged through the Scout Service. Typically, only academics are allowed on planet but Travellers who say they are there for scientific reasons – and not for sport fishing or some other illegal activity – can often wheedle their way into a short-term pass.

KYSIZI

Kysizi is a world of deep oceans with dozens of stitch-like mountain ranges along its tectonic plates that jut upward from the sea floor, striving to reach the surface. The few that actually made it above the waves formed several large islands and hundreds of smaller ones, covering less than two percent of the planet's surface. However, Kysizi's natural land masses are only part of its story.

Kysizi was once Ganshas, an important Ziru Sirka world along an extensive jump-1 trade route that ran from the Laraa subsector in Dagudashaag into the Arar subsector of Massilia, skirting through a few worlds on the periphery of the Core. Ganshassian civilisation lasted for thousands of years under Vilani rule. The world was under the aegis of all three of the major Bureaux and was considered to be one of the gems of the empire. While Ganshas had only marginal resources of its own, its location on the trade route made it a key world. Over the millennia, the Ganshassians built atop the islands and seamounts, creating another 18 million square kilometres of surface area for habitation.

At its peak, Ganshas was host to over eight billion people, over half of whom died from the effects of the Plague of Duskir, the collection of viruses and diseases brought to Vilani worlds by Terrans during the Interstellar Wars. For reasons unknown, the Ganshassians were uniquely vulnerable to the plague. Ganshas continued to decline in population during the deprivation of the Long Night but had nearly stabilised by the time it was contacted by Sylean Federation scouts. The natives of the world were once again decimated by plagues, which wiped out billions more in the years after contact with the Syleans. Despite reasonably high technology, the pathogens to which they were exposed were resilient against treatments and vaccines. By the time the plague had finished devastating the Ganshassians, a mere one percent of their original number remained.

The world was left barren for centuries but was, in the early 800s, resettled by colonists who salvaged what remained of its massive artificial land masses and built new cities upon them. Eight centuries is a long time and many of the old Ganshassian structures had crumbled, fallen into the sea or had been reclaimed by various algae, mosses and seavines. The fact that so many still remain is a testament to the durability of the high-tech materials used to build them.

While not technically an agricultural world, Kysizi's primary products are genetically engineered crops grown under translucent domes. The domes are made from a patented 'hyperpolymer' designed by engineers from the Naasirka megacorporation. This material extracts the desired nutrients of a system's star and filters out excessive radiation.

The majority of Kysizi's land masses are uninhabited but being picked over by millions of salvage robots who recycle materials found for incorporation into new buildings and other structures. Thanks to the investment of Naasirka, Kysizi has a very high-technology society. However, its citizenry are spread out and do not share a single government. Each of the major settlements has its own regional authority and the Law Level may be seen as an aggregate rating of the various city states.

A new wave of colonists have come to Kysizi to exploit its massive and revitalised fisheries. After centuries of being left alone, the oceanic ecosystem now resembles its pristine state before the world was settled thousands of years ago. Most of these newcomers live in floating seasteads, some of which are anchored to uninhabited seamounts. The instability of the crumbling structures along the coasts has made it difficult to settle them. Seasteader interaction with the world's land-locked cities is mostly achieved by grav vehicle. There are projects under foot to clear and rebuild the crumbling foundations of several coastal areas in order to create bona fide cities and harbours for ocean-going vessels.

LIA

Lia is known throughout the Core as 'the world of planned progress' where a complex terraforming, colonisation and civilisation-development project has been under way for millennia. Formerly an uninhabited Vilani reserve world with a thick, high-pressure carbon dioxide atmosphere, it has gradually been transformed into a habitable, self-sufficient society with one of the highest populations in the sector. During the Rule of Man, the world was selected from among several candidates by Terran colonists and was originally dubbed '51 Alpha' using the Roman numeral LI and the Greek letter α, which was eventually simplified to 'Lia'.

The colony was initially funded by the exorbitantly wealthy Corwin Corporation of Terra, which sought to prove that there are alternative paths to creating a habitable world and not all of them require a constant uptick in Tech Level. Corwin brought enormous stockpiles of raw materials and capital equipment to the system in preparation for the project. The world has intermittently and deliberately raised and dropped its Tech Level according to a perplexing and byzantine plan that eventually has Lia settling into a final, utopian state with a standard atmosphere, 60-percent hydrosphere, an expected 100 billion inhabitants at TL15 with an artificially intelligent computer running the show and effectively no government or Law Level to speak of.

Utopia continues to elude them but the Lians have indeed achieved a great deal during the nearly 3,000-year-long project. In the early going, colonists temporarily inhabited the system's airless rockball worlds while the initial terraforming stages were completed. An immense shield-mirror was installed to reflect the light of Lia's bright, whitish-yellow F-type star in order to cool the planet, thereby reducing its heat and atmospheric pressure, carbon dioxide was bled off by various methods, enormous amounts of hydrogen were imported from the system's gas giants to help create liquid water and a magnetic shield was built to prevent the thinned atmosphere from being stripped away. The real marvel is that most of this somehow occurred during the Long Night when the entire region was deprived of interstellar trade.

While the Lians have certainly achieved something remarkable, similar feats have been accomplished elsewhere in a much shorter period of time and considerably less effort. When the Imperium annexed the system, the Lians were struggling and yet refused all aid. Then numbering only 50 million people, they instituted a program of educational and industrial development that helped them rise to a peak of TL13 by the mid-500s. Having achieved that and stabilising their world, they then allowed it to falter to a middling TL10, where it remains today. By the early 600s, many of the Lians had had enough and people began to leave the world in droves. In the following two decades, millions emigrated to the surrounding systems with the vast majority making their way to Night.

It is unknown whether the Lians will ever reach their utopia but the ongoing attempt shows no signs of abating. It stands to reason that their spirit of self-reliance and the effort of generation upon generation to achieve the goal is, in itself, the glue that holds society together.

NIGHT

Night is the origin world of the Oo-ne-beto-pon-tee or 'the Whistlers' as most humans call them. The Whistlers are a small species with an average mass of 25 kilograms and a length of 40–60 centimetres. They resemble large, fat and hairy caterpillars with up to 96 small legs, the front six of which are larger and more coordinated than the other 90.

Whistlers have four sexes: male, female, neuter and matcher. The males and females are the only Whistlers capable of reproduction, which they do with great alacrity. In fact, meeting to mate and produce offspring is their sole obsession. When not mating, they go dormant and recede into one of several crèche types until summoned by a matcher. Matchers use their well-developed olfactory senses to locate suitable males and females to mate and then match them with one another. Once found, they call them, sometimes over a distance of up to 20 kilometres, to travel to a designated location for mating purposes. Most calls are made at a frequency of 50kHz, so humans cannot hear them with the unaided ear. Mating is a long, drawn-out affair with rituals, feasting and ultimately the act of mating itself, all of which is presided over by the matcher, whose pheromones and musk make procreation possible. Matchers typically manage two to six mating pairs at a time so they are busy going from one site to another to follow the process through to completion. Once mating has been accomplished, mating pairs are split up never to see one another again. It is assumed this is an adaptation that ensures genetic diversity.

The fourth Whistler sex is the neuter, incapable of reproduction. Neuters are the most industrious of all Whistlers and responsible for the construction of crèches, mating pagodas, airsails and just about any of the other contraptions the species uses. Neuters are the only sex that can 'whistle' in the lower frequencies and therefore the only ones who can speak with humans without the assistance of a frequency modulation device. In fact, neuters are also the only sex that is actually interested in speaking with humans. Matchers are far too busy matching and both males and females are either dormant or too obsessively engaged in the mating sequence to bother with anything else.

It is unknown when humans and Whistlers began interacting but the world was settled by the Vilani, so the relationship goes back millennia. It is likely that Whistlers had independently achieved TL1–2 based on the fossil record but no one really knows for sure. Solomani settlers came to Night during the Rule of Man, attracted by its rich natural resources and planetoid belts. The Solomani discovered – as the Vilani did before them – that living on the world of the Whistlers has an effect on human physiology. The pheromones and pollens given off by the creatures noticeably change human behaviour. While all humans can technically mate with one another provided there are no physiological ailments or other disabilities that prevent it, long-term exposure to the Whistlers causes humans to segment themselves into breeding groups. Males and females devote themselves to the practice of reproduction, aided by the skills of 'matchers' who – in the human adaptation of the practice – form the third part of a polyamorous threesome, which contain two males and a female or two females and a male. The 'neuters' among Night's humans are physically capable of mating but choose a life of celibacy, focusing instead on the construction and maintenance of Night's rather well-developed high-tech society. An interesting side effect enjoyed by the human neuters is a virtually unmatched ability to focus and concentrate on a task at hand. This supreme ability has enabled Night to achieve the Imperial maximum Tech Level in spite of the fact that the world receives relatively few visitors due to its isolated location.

The 'Whistler effect' wears off of most humans after a few months off planet. Those who leave Night often have a difficult time readjusting. Being born with strong biological imperatives and then having them stripped away has rather severe psychological effects and can cause depression and even suicide among those who leave. Departing humans also suffer withdrawal effects that can take weeks to overcome.

Night is designated as an Amber Zone to warn visiting Travellers of the effects that come from cohabitation with the world's native intelligent species. The Imperial Navy base in the system maintains a mostly separate existence for obvious reasons but naval personnel may sometimes be found on planet for short periods of time, after which they are subjected to a physical examination and pollen cleansing to ensure no long-term effects occur.

The Imperial Navy and bureaucracy are keeping a close eye on Night. The effects of exposure to its native alien species are localised, and seem to wear off after a short period of time offworld, but should a mutation occur or some other happenstance by which the effects became permanent and could be exported to neighbouring worlds, the Imperium could have a huge problem on its hands. The developing Imperium used to 'cleanse' such worlds in the past but now tries to manage them more carefully. At the very least, a Red Zone designation might be warranted should any changes occur in Night's unique ecosystem.

CREATING OO-NE-BETO-PON-TEE (WHISTLER) TRAVELLERS

Whistlers rarely leave Night but when they do they must typically take a decent number of their kind with them. The unique cooperation among the four sexes must be maintained at some level or they tend to wither and die. Some neuters are an exception and can become capable independent crew members aboard a starship or participating members of an alien society.

When away from Night, a group of Whistlers spreads out into whatever abode they have been confined to, preferring to have space between each other until called upon by a matcher for the mating rituals. Neuters build various structures in anticipation of their use by the other three sexes. If brought onto a starship, Whistlers begin to have an effect on a human crew after 4–6 weeks that is similar to what occurs on Night. In fact, Whistlers have a similar effect on many alien races, including all Major Races except the Hivers, half of whom have no sense of smell.

For the purposes of roleplaying, only the neuter sex is recommended. The extreme focus of matchers, males and females make them less-than-capable Travellers.

CHARACTERISTICS

Roll Whistler characteristics as follows: D3 for STR, END and SOC, 1D+4 for DEX, 2D-1 for INT and 2D for EDU. Whistlers are not actually less intelligent than the Major Races but the reduced Intellect reflects their extreme focus and specialisation.

TRAITS

Whistlers have the following traits:

Sticky Feet: Whistlers have sticky and clawed feet that enable them to climb just about any surface.
Sneaky: Whistlers automatically have Stealth 2 due to their quiet, unassuming natures.
High-frequency Communication and Perception: Whistlers can hear sounds from an extremely low 20Hz to a high of 60kHz.

REFERENCE

Reference is located at the nominal centre of the Imperium and is almost exactly on the central plane of the galactic disc. It is the administrative headquarters of the IISS and the primary data storage archive of the Imperium.

The world has a long and convoluted history and has been known by many names. The Vilani called it Shiishuusdar, which was apparently the name of a despised member of their nobility. They used the planet to test new weapons systems, which explains many of the black craters and burn marks on its surface that are still visible today. The Vilani eventually installed an extensive data storage network deep in the bowels of the planet, upon one of which they stored a copy of the Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin (AAB), the sum total of Vilani historical knowledge. During the Interstellar Wars, the Solomani dismissed the planet as a worthless rockball and evacuated it but otherwise left it intact, never realising what it contained. Refugees from various worlds occupied its subterranean warrens during the Long Night, and called the planet Mamatava, but the colony died out after a few centuries. During the era of the Sylean Federation, the planet was renamed Aadkhien for the corporation that purchased it. Aadkhien eventually went bankrupt and once again, the world was left barren. The world was then rediscovered by the Scout Service in the early 300s, during the reign of Porfiria. The Scouts were in the midst of the First Survey and when investigating Aadkhien, they found the Vilani archives. This was a monumental discovery but it took the scouts years to decipher and replicate the computer interfaces needed to access the data in the archives. During the process, the IISS decided the world would also be an ideal location for the storage of an Imperial archive. They renamed the world Reference and immediately began to assemble a powerful computer network substrate which would serve as the backbone of the project. The project evolved over time from being a strictly data-oriented project to a dedicated storage site for artefacts and samples found throughout Imperial space and beyond.

Reference is now host not only to the Scout Service but also to Core Research Station Alpha and the prestigious University of Aadkhien, which specialises in astronomy, physics, cosmology, planetology and sophontology. The capital city of Reference is called Encyclopaediopolis, the city centre including a grid of towers, each of which representing an Imperial sector and organised in the same order that they are found in Charted Space. Each tower is one kilometre long, 100 metres wide and a variable number of storeys tall, depending on how much space is required to store the data, artefacts, heirlooms and samples for the sector it represents. Most towers are up to one and a half kilometres high. In some cases, the data and collected samples for several worlds can be contained on a single storey. In others, multiple storeys are required for a single world, such as Capital, Vland or Terra. Not all data is publicly accessible and there are secure rooms and vaults that contain confidential information and materials, some of which have remained secret for centuries. The sector towers are separated by four-kilometre-wide spaces within which there are residential districts, shopping centres and other amenities.

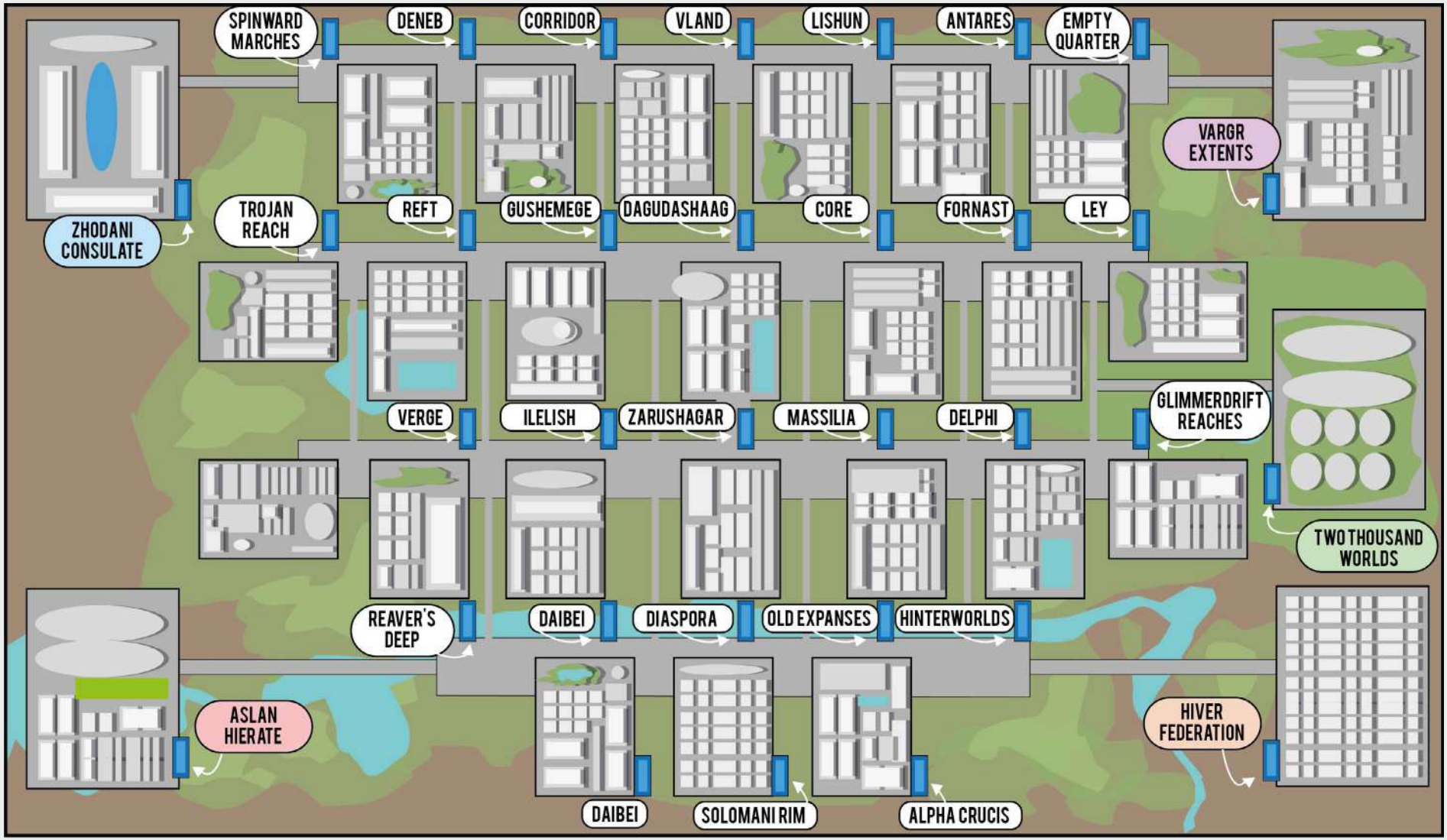
On the outskirts of Encyclopaediopolis, there are additional towers devoted to the Vargr Extents, Aslan Hierate, Zhodani Consulate, Hive Federation, the Two Thousand Worlds and the Solomani Sphere, all of which are also organised as they are found on the map of Charted Space. There are also hundreds of warehouses on the southern periphery of the city that are used for the storage of items too dangerous, obsolete or in many cases too large to store within the borders of the city. The university and research station grounds are to the nominal north of the city but their respective grounds are linked to Encyclopaediopolis by a shared data network and maglev transportation system.

While the Encyclopaediopolis facilities are made open to Imperial citizens on a case-by-case basis, the vast majority of users are accredited scholars, students working on post-graduate theses, members of the Scout Service and other Imperial officials.

Reference is a key strategic resource for the Imperium and is well defended by the Imperial Navy and Scout Service. Two full naval squadrons are present in the system and the scouts maintain both a fleet of auxiliary ships and a decommissioned *Azhanti High Lightning*-class cruiser that is reserved for important operations. The official name of the cruiser is that of the ancient Vilani archives, *Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin*, but the scouts call her the *Librarian* or ‘Libby’ for short. In addition to these, there are almost always elements from the Core Sector Fleet present in the system.

In addition to serving as custodians of Encyclopaediopolis, the scout base includes extensive training facilities and a specialised fleet of x-boats and tenders. When new and important discoveries are made, the x-boat fleet is activated and its spacecraft are sent to Capital and other key worlds. The last major data dump to Reference occurred in 1065 when the Second Grand Imperial Survey was completed.

ENCYCLOPAEDIOPOLIS



Sector Towers

Residential, Commercial, and Transportation Buildings

SECOND REFERENCE

Reference contains the largest body of information and artefacts ever collected by Humaniti. The planet, and more specifically the data it contains, is of immense strategic importance to the Imperium. For that reason, the Imperium allegedly keeps a 'Second Reference' at some undisclosed location. Many x-boats and long-range scout/couriers are said to carry secure, encrypted updates to Second Reference frequently in order to keep the two facilities as synchronised as possible.

Information travels at the speed of jump and the same can be said for the preservation of Reference's data stores. There is no other practical way to ensure this happens other than for starships to physically carry it there. That said, the location of this alleged Second Reference is a mystery. There are many rumours about its location, none of which have been confirmed by physical evidence. No starships have been directly tracked making the journey to Second Reference but then the scouts would do everything in their power to maintain its confidentiality. Some believe that a complete copy of Reference's data is on Zikhi, the system at the exact opposite corner of the Core. Others believe it is far away on a remote system in the Empty Quarter. There are those who think it is not in the Imperium at all but in fact on an unincorporated world in Star's End, perhaps Enola or Miramon.

The idea of a backup with a nearly complete copy of the data is entirely conceivable but there is simply no way to replicate the artefacts and samples at Reference. However, some surmise that Second Reference is the storage site for unusual samples and the most dangerous artefacts, perhaps Ancients devices that could pose a threat to Imperial security, should they fall into the wrong hands. All of this is idle speculation, of course.

Whatever the case may be, the Intelligence Branch of the Scout Service is tight-lipped about it and only those with the highest levels of authority and clearance know anything about Second Reference… that is, if it even exists.

ARGUSHIIGI ADMEGULASHA BILANIDIN (THE LIBRARIAN OR 'LIBBY')

CLASS: AZHANTI HIGH LIGHTNING CRUISER

Libby is a refurbished *Azhanti High Lightning*-class cruiser permanently assigned to the Reference scout base. She has been modified for use by the scouts; the fighter wing, launch tubes and recovery deck have been replaced by docking spaces for eight Type-S scout/couriers and two full hangars where they are serviced. The armouries have been replaced with laboratories, libraries and a mail distribution array.

TL15		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	60,000 tons, Standard	—	3000
	Reinforced	—	1500
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 5	2,400	1800
M-Drive	Thrust 2	1,200	2400
J-Drive	Jump 5	7,505	11257.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 54,150	3,610	3610
Fuel Tanks	J-5, 8 weeks of operation	30,722	—
Bridge		60	300
Computer	Core/80	—	95
Sensors	Improved	3	4.3
	Distributed Arrays	6	8.6
Weapons	Particle Accelerator Spinal Mount (TL12)	6,300	2200
	Small Missile Bays x24	1,200	288
	Fusion Barbettes x40	200	160
	Triple Turrets (pulse lasers) x199	199	796
	Triple Turrets (sandcasters) x130	130	227.5
Ammunition	Missile Storage (2,880 missiles)	240	—
	Sandcaster Storage (3,900 barrels)	195	—
Screens	Meson Screens x6	60	120
	Nuclear Dampers x5	50	50
Craft	Docking Spaces (40 tons) x5	220	55
	Pinnaces x5	—	43.56
	Docking Spaces (100 tons) x8	880	220
	Scout/Couriers x8	—	295.524
	Hangars (100 tons) x2	400	80
	Docking Spaces (400 tons) x4	1,760	440
	Fuel Shuttles x4	—	360.828

Hull: 33,000

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

MCr2.2264734/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr26717.680

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems
12,000

Manoeuvre Drive
12,000

Jump Drive
30,000

Sensors
8

Weapons
3,637

Fuel Processor
200

ARGUSHIIGI ADMEGULASHA BILANIDIN (THE LIBRARIAN OR 'LIBBY')

CLASS: AZHANTI HIGH LIGHTNING CRUISER

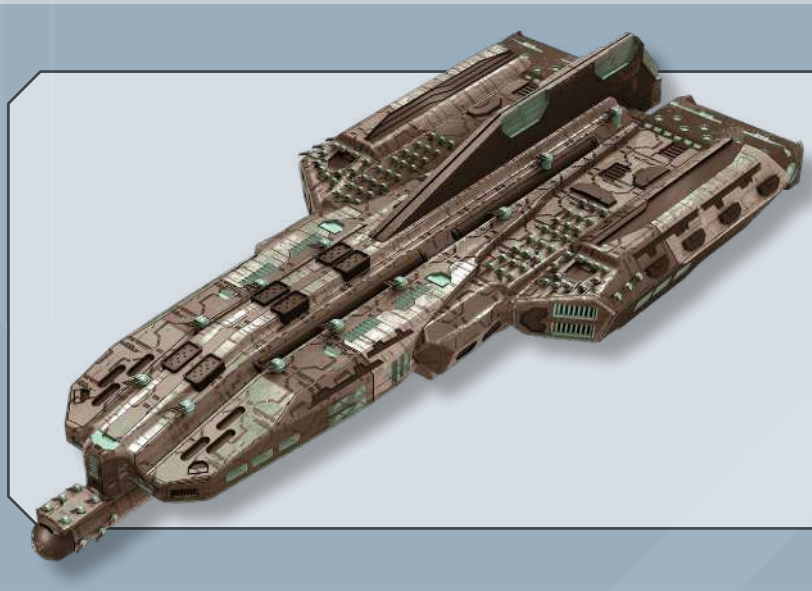
TL14		TONS	COST (MCR)
Systems	Briefing Rooms x7	28	3.5
	Fuel Processor (4,000 tons/day)	200	10
	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Laboratories x5	20	5
	Libraries x4	16	16
	Mail Distribution Array (TL13)	20	10
	Medical Bays x6	24	12
	Workshops x4	24	3.6
Staterooms	Standard x401	1,604	200.5
	High x1	6	0.8
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/5	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Advanced Fire Control/1	—	12
	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Electronic Warfare/2	—	18
	Evade/3	—	2
	Intellect*	—	16
	Virtual Gunner/2	—	10
Common Areas		401	40.1
Cargo		317	—

*The ship's Intellect program is a TL15 prototype that approaches the functionality of a Conscious Intelligence. It answers to the name 'Libby' and may be treated as a computer-bound NPC with INT 13 and EDU 13, with a range of skills that can be uploaded, changed and improved (typically in the skill level 2–4 range).

Crew

Captain, Pilots x3, Astrogator, Engineers x295, Maintenance x30, Medics x6, Gunners x 393**, Administrators x30, Officers x37

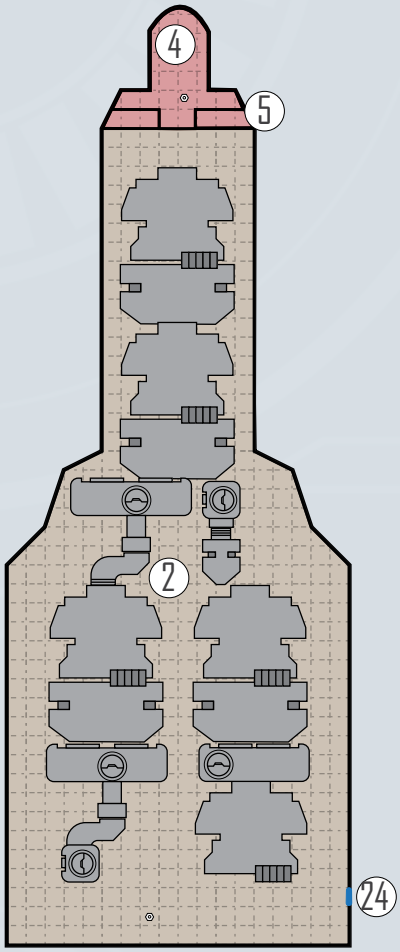
**Gunners may be reduced depending on how many are allocated to the Virtual Gunner software. Note that increasing the number of virtual gunners increases the bandwidth used by the software. Refer to High Guard for more information.



ARGUSHIIGI ADMEGULASHA BILANIDIN

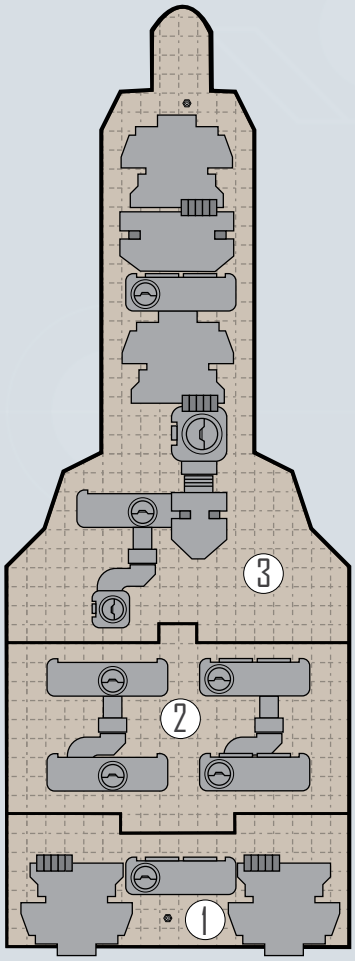
ARGUSHIIGI ADMEGULASHA BILANIDIN

DECK 1 – FUEL DECK



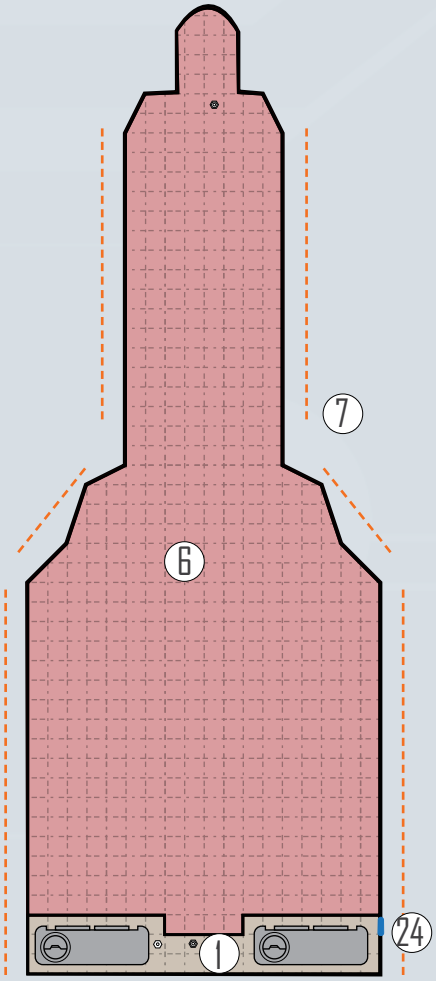
1. M–Drive
2. J–Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Fusion Barbettes
5. Meson Screens

DECK 2

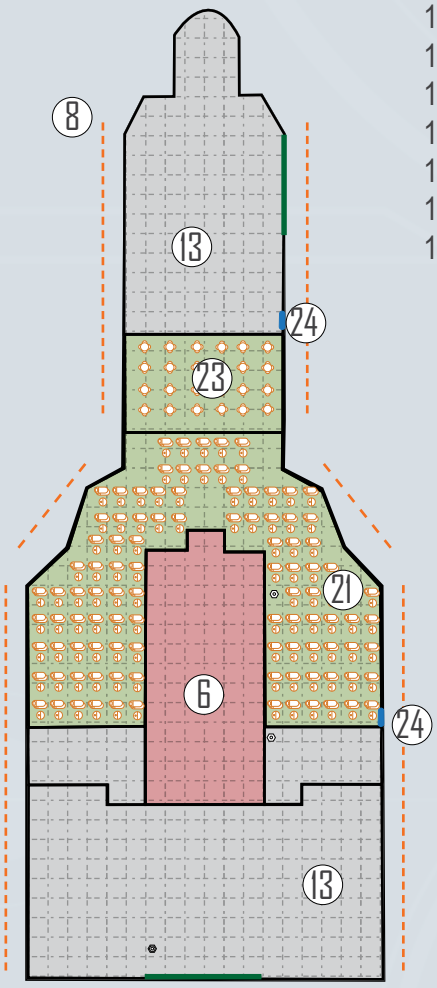


DECK 3

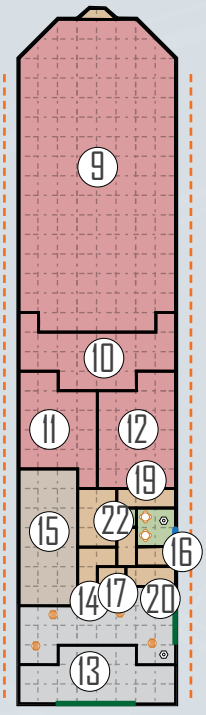
ARGUSHIIGI ADMEGULASHA BILANIDIN



DECK 4



DECK 5



DECK 6

6. Particle Accelerator Spinal Mount
7. Triple Turrets (pulse lasers)
8. Triple Turrets (sandcasters)
9. Small Missile Bays
10. Missile Storage
11. Sandcaster Storage
12. Nuclear Dampers
13. Docking Spaces
14. Briefing Rooms
15. Fuel Processor
16. Laboratories
17. Libraries
18. Mail Distribution Array
19. Medical Bays
20. Workshops
21. Staterooms
22. High Stateroooms
23. Common Areas
24. Airlocks

1 SQUARE = 10 TONS

CH'NAAR

Ch'naar is dominated by its capital, Aursis, which owns four other worlds in the subsector. Aursis has owned Okefir and Vala since they were initially colonised in the year 57 but more recently acquired Diam Kani and Siniir Sa. Aursis allegedly has its sights set on Anshar as well. Duchess daMae of Aursis claims that Aursis' presence on so many worlds is necessary to prevent a full-blown Chanestin insurgency from the Dunea subsector. Dubious Imperial intelligence officials and the Duchess' rivals in the Moot have expressed concern that she is overstepping her boundaries and attempting to carve out an empire within the empire. Despite the Duchess' ravenous appetite for worlds, the Imperium has thus far resisted the urge to rein her in. The Sector Fleet has made some noise about sending squadrons to Zagi Uun to monitor the situation more closely but no moves have been made as yet.

Critics in the media and at court wonder if the whole thing is not just an elaborate bit of political theatre. The threat of a Chanestin insurgency is real and the presence of a bold and boisterous counterweight in the region might actually serve the Imperium well. While the Imperial Navy Admiralty has often expressed concern about Aursis' aggression towards its neighbours, it could be a case of 'they doth protest too much'. Aursis' strong presence in Ch'naar might block the Chanestin from further expansion. It might well be that the Imperium is wilfully letting Aursis flex its muscles in the region so that the Imperial Navy does not have to.

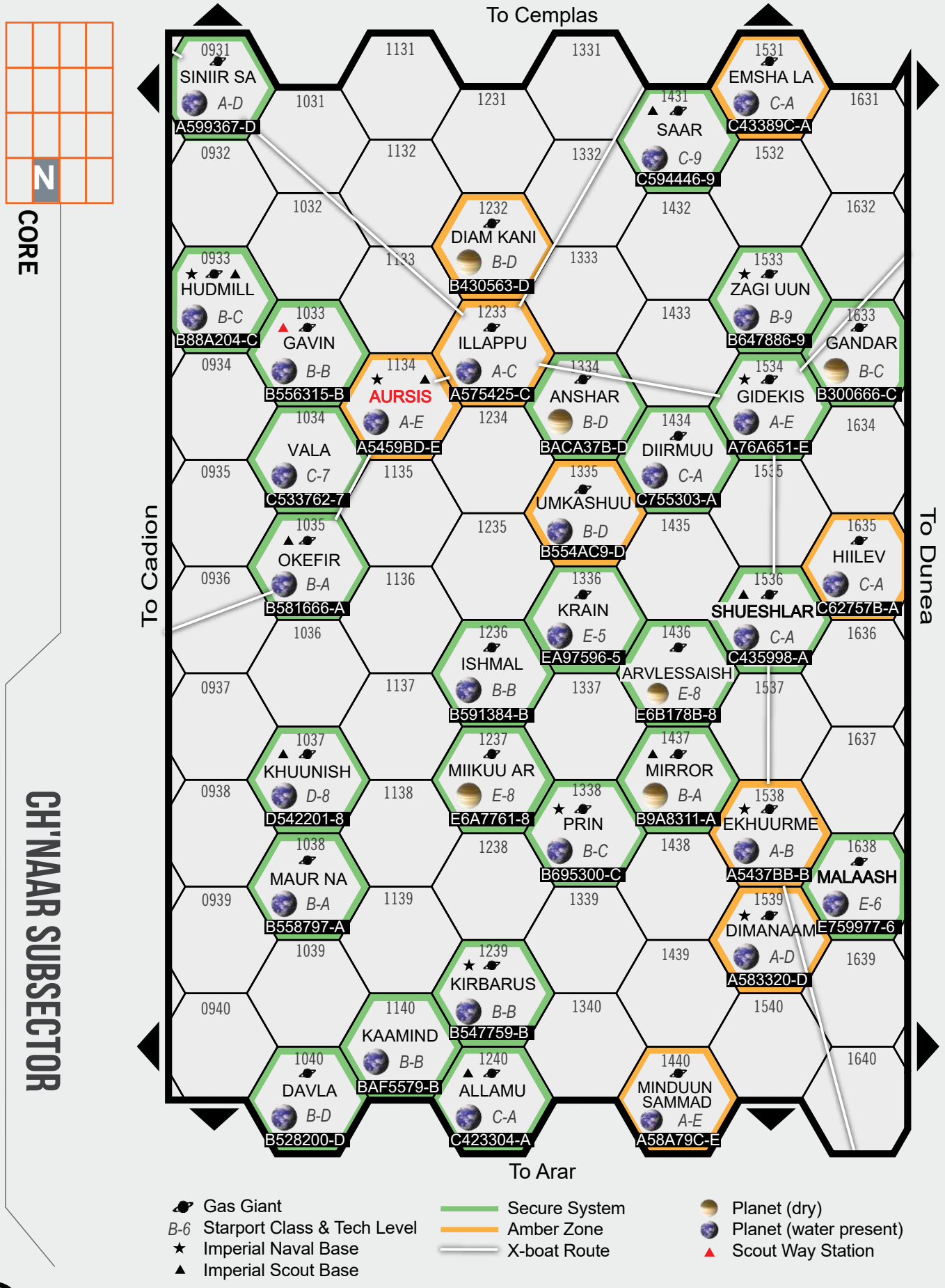
As for the worlds conquered by Aursis, they have been – to this point, anyway – mostly low-population systems with only minor holdings. Despite dramatic shows of force when taking each star system, Aursisian troops actually encountered little to no resistance when acquiring Diam Kani and Siniir Sa. Furthermore, Aursis has not instituted martial law on any of the captured worlds; if anything, laws have become less restrictive under the Aursisian aegis.

The one exception is Okefir, whose gradual rise in technology and increasing population has spurred an independence movement. Aursisian occupiers have made it quite clear to the Okefiri that they have no intention of granting the world self-rule. An Okefiri resistance movement has begun to form and they like their chances against their oppressors. While Aursis has a significant technological advantage, the harsh desert environment of Okefir is not something Aursisian troops are used to and a war of attrition could come out in Okefir's favour.

Headquartered at Aursis, the 150th Fleet consists of six squadrons and is heavily used as an instrument of force and intimidation throughout the subsector. The bulk of the squadrons maintain an ominous presence in the Ekhuurme and Dimanaam systems, where the Duchess claims she is keeping a watchful eye on the Chanestin worlds to trailing for the sake of Imperial security. Ekhuurme has a large Chanestin minority whom the Aursisians gleefully oppress. The flagship of the 150th is a hardy prototype of the new *Voroshilef*-class battleship which the shipyards at Dimanaam hope to make a staple of the Sector Fleet. The less-well-appointed 150th Colonial Fleet is tasked with patrolling Ch'naar's spinward flank.

Tensions run high in Ch'naar, with nine systems designated as Amber Zones. Many of these worlds have been spurred into action to help prevent Chanestin incursions and their Amber Zone classifications reflect a heightened level of anxiety. For their part, Chanestin populations profess not to know what all the fuss is about. They have made it clear that they see themselves as a distinct culture, worthy of all the rights and protections afforded to the Lancians, Luriani and Antareans in other sectors. They have not violated Imperial laws in any way, shape or form and see no reason for the Imperium to fear them. Furthermore, they claim to have no territorial aspirations beyond those of their original 25 worlds.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Allamu	1240	S	C423304-A	Ht Lo Po		G
Anshar	1334		BACA37B-D	Fl Ht Lo		G
Arvlessaish	1436		E6B178B-8	Fl		G
Aursis	1134	N S	A5459BD-E	Hi Ht In	A	
Davla	1040		B528200-D	Ht Lo		G
Diam Kani	1232		B430563-D	De Ht Ni Po	A	G
Diirmuu	1434		C755303-A	Ga Lo		G
Dimanaam	1539	N	A583320-D	Ht Lo	A	
Ekhuurme	1538	N	A5437BB-B	Po	A	G
Emsha La	1531		C43389C-A	Na Po	A	G
Gandar	1633		B300666-C	Ht Na Ni Va		G
Gavin	1033	W	B556315-B	Lo		G
Gidekis	1534	N	A76A651-E	Ht Ni Ri Wa		G
Hiilev	1635		C62757B-A	Ni	A	G
Hudmill	0933	N S	B88A204-C	Ht Lo Wa		G
Illappu	1233		A575425-C	Ht Ni	A	G
Ishmal	1236		B591384-B	Lo		G
Kaamind	1140		BAF5579-B	Ni		
Khuunish	1037	S	D542201-8	Lo Po		G
Kirbarus	1239	N	B547759-B	Ag		G
Krain	1336		EA97596-5	Ag Lt Ni		G
Malaash	1638		E759977-6	Hi		G
Maur Na	1038		B558797-A	Ag		G
Miikuu Ar	1237		E6A7761-8	Fl		G
Minduun Sammad	1440		A58A79C-E	Ht Ri Wa	A	G
Mirror	1437	S	B9A8311-A	Fl Lo		G
Okefir	1035	S	B581666-A	Ni Ri		G
Prin	1338	N	B695300-C	Ht Lo		G
Saar	1431	S	C594446-9	Ni		G
Shueshlar	1536	S	C435998-A	Hi		G
Siniir Sa	0931		A599367-D	Ht Lo		G
Umkashuu	1335		B554AC9-D	Hi Ht	A	G
Vala	1034		C533762-7	Na Po		
Zagi Uun	1533	N	B647886-9			G


CORE
N
CH'NAAR SUBSECTOR
To Cemplas
To Cadion
To Dunea
To Arar
0931
SINIIR SA
A-D
A599367-D
1131
1331
1531
EMSHA LA
C-A
C43389C-A
1031
1231
1631
1431
SAAR
C-9
C594446-9
0932
1132
1332
1532
1032
1232
DIAM KANI
B-D
B430563-D
1432
1632
0933
HUDMILL
B-C
B88A204-C
1133
1333
1533
ZAGI UUN
B-9
B647886-9
1033
GAVIN
B-B
B556315-B
1233
ILLAPPU
A-C
A575425-C
1433
1633
GANDAR
B-C
B300666-C
0934
1134
AURSIS
A-E
A5459BD-E
1334
ANSHAR
B-D
BACA37B-D
1534
GIDEKIS
A-E
A76A651-E
1034
VALA
C-7
C533762-7
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1434
DIIRMUU
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UMKASHUU
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OKEFIR
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ARVLESSAISH
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E6B178B-8
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1537
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KHUUNISH
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D542201-8
1237
MIIKUU AR
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1437
MIRROR
B-A
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1138
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PRIN
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B695300-C
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A-B
A5437BB-B
1038
MAUR NA
B-A
B558797-A
1238
1438
1638
MALAASH
E-6
E759977-6
0939
1139
1339
1539
DIMANAAM
A-D
A583320-D
1039
1239
KIRBARUS
B-B
B547759-B
1439
1639
0940
1140
KAAMIND
B-B
BAF5579-B
1340
1540
1040
DAVLA
B-D
B528200-D
1240
ALLAMU
C-A
C423304-A
1440
MINDUUN SAMMAD
A-E
A58A79C-E
1640
Gas Giant
B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
Imperial Naval Base
Imperial Scout Base
Secure System
Amber Zone
X-boat Route
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)
Scout Way Station

DUCHESS COLYERE HAJESTA DAMAE

Even in an empire with trillions of sophonts, there are outsized personalities who dominate worlds, subsectors and sometimes even entire sectors. Such is the case in the Ch'naar subsector where the Duchess Colyere Hajesta daMae rules the roost. The duchess has had a distinguished – if controversial – career, starting with her military service. Born to the nobility on Cobham in the Old Expanses, daMae's family had a multi-generational history of service in the Imperial Navy. Young Colyere created a stir by breaking tradition and opting for service in the Imperial Marines where she fought in brushfire wars against Solomani insurgents on the Imperial border, rising to the rank of brigadier by the age of 30. Despite the misgivings of her family, there could be no doubt that Colyere was a born leader.

After retirement from the military, she became the matriarch of her family and countess of her homeworld. She was sent to Capital to join the deliberative body of the Moot. Colyere had a talent – some would say a misguided one – for boiling issues down to their basic elements and cutting through any red tape that got in her way. Her abrasive style got her into conflicts with her fellow nobles, a few which came to fisticuffs, and it soon became obvious that if the Moot Spire were going to remain standing, Colyere would have to be reassigned.

Emperor Strephon learned to rely upon Colyere to give him uncensored opinions about a number of issues including what she thought of his leadership style. Most of the peerage kowtow to the Emperor and there are few among them willing to tell him exactly what they think, which makes nobles like Colyere invaluable. After problems with Chanestin insurgents began to plague Ch'naar, the Moot reassigned its subsector duke and put Colyere in his place, purportedly at the behest of the Emperor. That was 20 years ago and things have changed dramatically since then.

Colyere is a large and intimidating woman who usually has a scowl or sneer on her face. She is an aging lioness but one who still has a considerable bite. She refuses to use anagathics to preserve her youth but maintains a strict dietary and exercise regimen and consumes high-tech nutrient supplements in an effort to stay fit as a fiddle.

DUCHESS COLYERE HAJESTA DAMAE

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	Female	68

TRAITS				— SKILLS
STR	8 (9)	INT	13	Admin 2, Athletics (strength) 1, Flyer (grav) 1, Diplomat 1, Electronics (comms) 1, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Heavy Weapons (portable) 1, Leadership 4, Melee (blade) 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Persuade 4, Recon 2, Tactics (military) 3, Vacc Suit 2
DEX	8 (9)	EDU	12	
END	9	SOC	15	

EQUIPMENT	
	Muscular Bridging, Neural Comm, Neural Jack, Wafer Jack **Weapons:** Marine Static Cutlass (3D+2, AP6) when in dress uniform, Laser Pistol (high yield, 4D, AP 2) when a sidearm is allowed **Armour:** Personal Energy Shield (+12) or TL15 Battle Dress (+25)

DIAM KANI

Diam Kani is the site of a failed terraforming experiment in which genetically engineered 'airplants' – a collection of oxygen-producing purplish-black plants, fungi and lichen – were strategically spread over the desert world's surface in an effort to thicken its atmosphere. The original expedition to the world failed to find aquifers or other sources of liquid water and funding dried up before they could import the needed hydrogen and nitrogen to make things work. Nevertheless, the resilient genetically engineered airplants have grown in abundance, extracting nitrogen and oxygen from the soil and distributing it into Diam Kani's otherwise inhospitable atmosphere. Unfortunately, the planet's lack of a magnetic field, small size and proximity to its orange main sequence primary means oxygen generated by the airplants is bled off at a slightly slower rate than it is generated. In time, the ravenous airplants will consume most of the oxygen from the soil and leave the world an even more dried-out husk than they found it.

When Aursis acquired Diam Kani, it was assumed they would find a way to jumpstart the terraforming project and get things back on track. However, this was far from their intentions. Aursis has converted Diam Kani into a 'war world', a place where squabbling systems in Ch'naar come to air out their grievances with one another so they do not have to wreak havoc on their own environments. Apparently, the idea originated from a chance encounter with a high-ranking Aslan member of the Imperial Guard. The Aslan told stories about the ruling clans back in the Hierate, who designated certain inhospitable worlds as neutral locations where conflicting clans could go to conduct forms of ritual warfare. This enabled them to resolve disputes without wrecking valuable landholds on their own worlds.

So far, Diam Kani has only been the site of a few small battles, all of which were staged to resolve disputes between bickering nobles. The wreckage of each conflagration has been left behind on the planet like so much rubbish. Subsequent battles have used the burned-out chassis of tanks and APCs from previous conflicts as cover and field fortifications. Salvagers are allowed to scour dormant battlefields at their leisure but the hostile environment of the planet prevents all but the most well-geared crews from doing so.

While the war world concept has yet to fully catch on, megacorporation Instellarms and other weapons dealers have set up shop at Diam Kani to sell their wares. Diam Kani's atmosphere is very thin but rich in oxygen, which means that demonstrations of mid-tech conventional arms produce impressive pyrotechnical displays. The ring of territory extending from approximately 100–250km from the starport is used for all sorts of weapon demonstrations, many of which result in big sales for the corporation. In fact, sales have been so brisk that Instellarms invested in the starport, upgrading it from Class C to Class B, in order to accommodate the rush of customers to the planet.

Meanwhile, critics have come to question the feasibility of the war world concept. In the Core, most disputes are resolved diplomatically. While armed conflicts certainly occur from time-to-time, the Core is supposed to represent the peak of human achievement. Designating worlds like Diam Kani as places to kill one another might have a deleterious effect on civilisation. The battles that have been held on the world so far could definitely have been resolved with less loss of life and property damage. In fact, some question whether these wars would have occurred at all if a venue such as Diam Kani did not exist.

GIDEKIS

Count Rolfo Menderis of Gidekis is originally from Night in the Cadion subsector where he made his riches producing advanced quantum microprocessors for the Imperial Navy. The Menderis Corporation remains a powerful, multi-subsector operation and competes well against megacorporations in the same industries. Menderis was awarded a noble patent for his efforts and assigned the Gidekis, Gandar and Shueshlar systems as his county. During the reign of the previous subsector duke, Menderis had virtual free reign to administer the worlds under his purview. He designed and appointed each of their respective governments, traded freely with whomever he wished and influenced the current governmental structure of Khea, a key world of the old Chanestin Kingdom. Under the current subsector duchess, he finds himself considerably more restrained.

Gidekisian government is based on a high degree of specialisation with each of its widespread oceanic provinces focused on a unique industry. The largest 'continent' in the Gide (the word used for the planet's worldwide ocean) is Lemuria, which consists of a series of cities built on seamounts and floating grav platforms. Lemuria is the primary processing centre for the Gidekis fishing industry which, like most Gidekisian operations, is highly automated. Other continents are focused on the fishing operations themselves, aquaculture and deep-sea mining. The high technology at Gidekis' disposal means that little labour is performed by human hands but instead done remotely using specialised robots. These robots are designed on Gidekis and manufactured on Gandar.

Menderis' operations have recently come under scrutiny by Aursisian authorities who have threatened to impose a subsector-wide embargo on trade with the Chanestin worlds. However, evidence suggests that Menderis has not reduced shipments to them at all. While there are no Imperial laws that prevent trade with the Chanestin, Menderis must tread a fine line. He does billions of Credits of business with Aursis and does not want to jeopardise his contracts with the subsector capital. Aursisian government agents and auditors are trying to catch Menderis in the act of smuggling goods to prohibited worlds in Dunea subsector but have so far been unable to prove that anything is amiss. Despite the lack of a 'smoking gun', Aursis is pulling out all the stops to drive Gidekis into submission. Aursisian diplomats are attempting to curry favour with the government of Zimmel, which owns Gandar. Aursis wants Zimmel to force Gandar to expel Menderis' manufacturing operations on the world if they continue to flout the embargo. Menderis provides a lot of jobs on Gandar and Zimmel is hesitant to rock the boat; however, the Duchess of Aursis has promised that the Emperor will assign baronies to the Anarchs of Zimmel should they comply. This tangled web of corporate and political influence has yet to be resolved. Meanwhile, Menderis is content to keep all of his operations running smoothly until he finds himself forced to do otherwise.

HIILEV

Hiilev is home to a human Minor Race of sorts but not one seeded there by the Ancients. The Hiidamo are descended from Vilani colonists who came to the world during the early settlement of Ukan (the Vilani name for the Core sector). It seems likely that they were genetically engineered to survive the conditions of the planet. They settled the lowlands of Hiilev's richest river valley and developed dark and leathery skin that protects them from exposure to the harsh rays of the system's primary star. The Hiidamo have large, overdeveloped lungs that can extract oxygen from the planet's very thin atmosphere and filter out its sulphur-dioxide taint.

The Hiidamo have a xenophobic culture and did not take well to the arrival of Imperial colonists in 420. The newcomers were more interested in gaining access to the world's rich sea life than encroaching on Hiidamo territory but conflicts between the two groups occurred nonetheless. The colonists had superior technology and some factions among them wanted to commit genocide on the Hiidamo. A colonial militia began to systematically search for and destroy Hiidamo settlements, killing every man, woman and child in several of them. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed before the natives could be scoured from the planet and the colonists left the remainder alone. The two have learned to live separately in the intervening centuries.

KRAIN AND MIRROR

The Geonee Alakavala Corporation from the Massilia sector has been buying up property and industrial capital on Krain and Mirror, two worlds with suitable environments for the high-gravity-oriented human Minor Race. The Geonee are eager to get a foothold in the Core market and an overemphasis on military matters in Ch'naar has them believing they can make a splash by focusing on commercial pursuits by rapidly increasing the Tech Levels of both worlds and making them viable players in the heavy machinery and automation industries. The Geonee, who tend to govern with a light touch, believe their values will be embraced by the locals of these two worlds, each of which has a remarkably free society.

As a species, the Geonee are highly focused on ownership. They very much want to know who owns what and, furthermore, what they can obtain for themselves. This cultural trait has been a bit jarring for some of the long-time residents of these worlds. While both worlds are barely populated, and there is plenty of land to be had, the aggressive approach of the Geonee has made their arrival feel a bit more like an invasion than a business venture. For their part, the Geonee have expressed that they merely want to know where the lines are drawn so they do not offend the locals. They also want to know what is up for grabs so they can establish ownership of the things they believe they will need to be successful.

The Geonee are common in Imperial space and may be found on a number of worlds. They usually segregate themselves into ethnic communities but are quite gregarious and branch out into society by taking roles in engineering and business. One of the more eccentric aspects of the Geonee is that they believe they are the descendants of the Ancients. While others find this dubious, the Geonee seem to be quite assured of their heritage. Knowing that Geonee often seek out worlds with Ancients sites has caused a bit of a stir in the region. Neither Krain nor Mirror are known to have been graced by the Ancients but the mere presence of the Geonee has drawn archaeologists and speculators to these worlds for a fresh look.

Mirror is a highly unsettled world with a great deal of hydrogen sulphide in its oceans, deposited there by its many active volcanos. The world is so named because of the reflective properties of its oceans. This visual oddity may have increased speculation of an Ancients presence, even if it is merely a chemical phenomenon. In fact, the Geonee are mostly interested in this world because it reminds them of Shiwonee, their highly unstable homeworld. Shiwonee is troubled by extensive climate change, which precipitates the nomadic movement of the Geonee people.

BATTLESHIP

CLASS: VOROSHILEF

The pride of Dimanaam Shipyards is the *Voroshilef*-class battleship, a hardy, versatile, well-armed capital ship that is built to last. The *Voroshilef* is designed with a war of attrition in mind. In naval circles, it is called the 'doomsday dreadnought' not because it is more capable than other ships but more so because it is not. Its designers assert that its slightly lower Tech Level makes it invaluable in the event of a large, drawn-out interstellar conflict. At TL13, crews will be better able to maintain the *Voroshilef* with parts on hand and would not have to rely on the ready availability of TL15 replacements and materials. Hubris in the Admiralty has made the *Voroshilef* programme a controversial one. The Imperium mostly builds ships designed to win short battles with overpowering force. Only the most pragmatic officers of the flag are willing to entertain the notion that the Imperium could get drawn into a long, difficult conflict. Should the project take hold, Dimanaam expects to massively expand its shipyard and attract a large labour force to build many more ships of the class.

TL13		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	200,000 tons, Close Structure, Reinforced	—	13500
	Radiation Shielding	—	5000
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 3	7,500	2025
M-Drive	Thrust 6	12,000	24000
J-Drive	Jump 4	20,005	30007.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 266,580	17,772	17772
Fuel Tanks	J-4, 8 weeks of operation	83,556	—
Bridge	Holographic Controls	60	1250
	Command, Holographic Controls	80	1875
Computer	Core/80 (primary)	—	95
	Core/70 (backup)	—	80
Sensors	Improved x2	6	8.6
	Distributed Arrays x2	18	18
	Enhanced Signal Processing x2	4	16
	Countermeasures Suites x2	4	8
Weapons	Particle Accelerator Spinal Mount (TL13)	23,800	9600
	Large Missile Bays (reduced size x3) x24	8,400	4500
	Medium Meson Gun Bays x10	1,000	1,000
	Small Fusion Gun Bays x30	1,500	240
	Plasma Barbettes x120	600	600
	Triple Turrets (pulse lasers) x500	500	2000
	Triple Turrets (sandcasters) x200	200	350
	Type II Point Defence Batteries x20	400	200
Screens	Meson Screens x40	400	800
	Nuclear Dampers x20	200	200
Ammunition	Missile Storage (69,120 missiles)	5,760	—
	Sandcaster Storage (8,000 barrels)	400	—

Crew

Captain, Pilots and Flight Officers x28, Astrogator, Medics x16, Maintenance x133, Engineers x475, Administrators x66, Officers x148, Gunners x556, Marines x200

Hull: 161,333

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

MCr9.98744/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr119849.28

Power Requirements

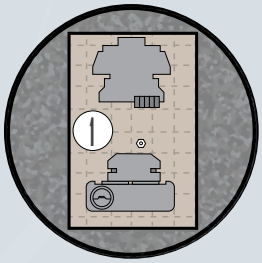
Basic Ship Systems
40,000
Manoeuvre Drive
120,000
Jump Drive
80,000
Sensors
22
Weapons
22,940
Fuel Processor
2,000

TL13		TONS	COST (MCR)
Systems	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Fuel Processor (40,000 tons/day)	2,000	100
	Repair Drones	2,000	400
	Barracks x200	400	20
	Brigs x4	16	1
	Briefing Rooms x8	32	4
	Armouries x107	107	26.75
	Medical Bays x16	64	32
	UNREP System (1,000 tons/hour)	50	25
	Workshops x67	402	60.3
Craft	Launch Tube (50 tons)	500	250
	Recovery Deck (50 tons)	500	250
	Docking Space (250 tons)	275	68.75
	Docking Space (1,000 tons)	1100	275
	Docking Space (16 tons)	18	4.5
	Deployment Shuttles (50 ton) x5	—	178.8795
	Heavy Fighters (50 ton) x20	—	1326.6
	Air/Rafts x4	—	1
Staterooms	Standard x935	3,740	467.5
	High x3	18	2.4
	Emergency Low Berths x464	464	464
	Low Berths x410	205	20.5
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Auto-Repair/2	—	10
	Advanced Fire Control/2	—	15
	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Battle System/2	—	24
	Broad Spectrum EW	—	14
	Electronic Warfare/2	—	18
	Launch Solution/3	—	16
	Point Defence/2	—	12
Common Areas		938	93.8
Cargo		2,413	—

VOROSHILEF-CLASS BATTLESHIP

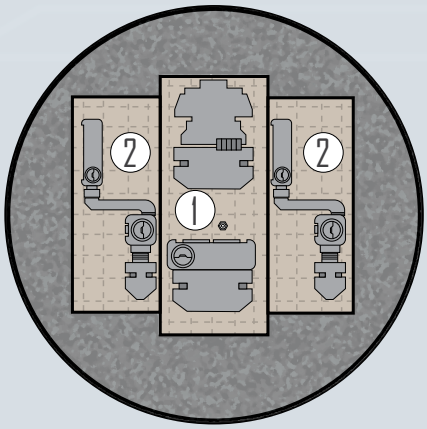
VOROSHILEF-CLASS BATTLESHIP

DECK 1



1. M–Drive
2. J–Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Airlocks
5. Triple Turrets (pulse lasers)

DECK 2



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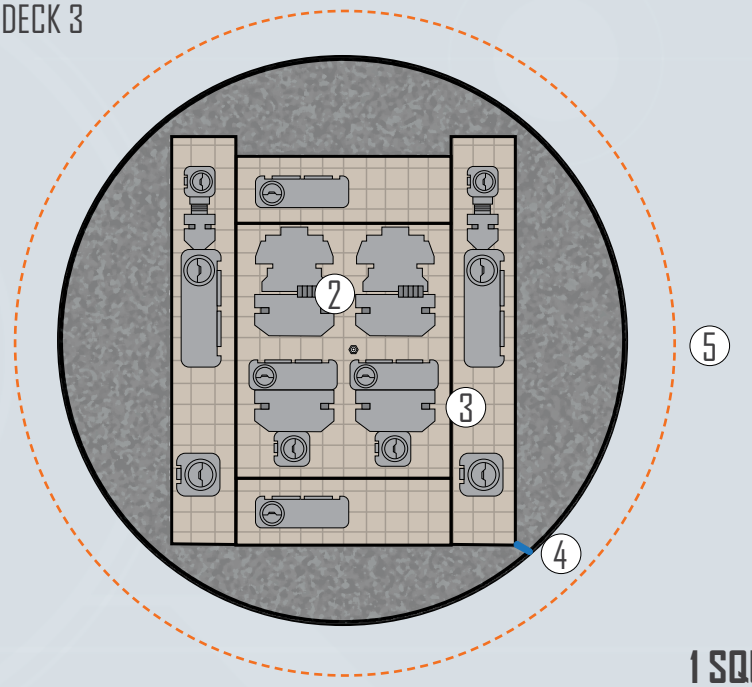
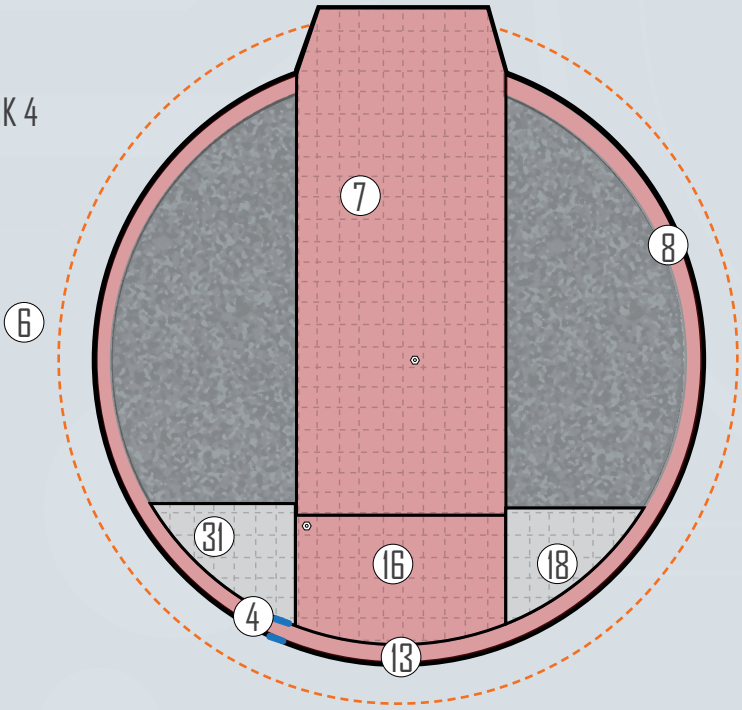


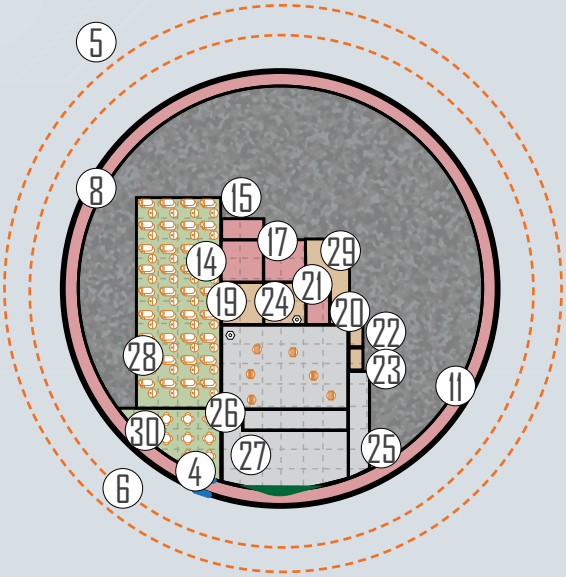
1 SQUARE = 100 TONS

VOROSHILEF-CLASS BATTLESHIP

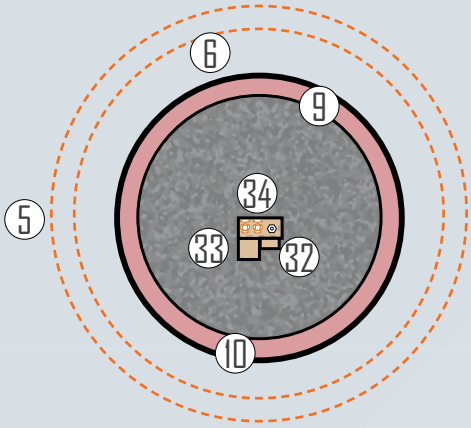
DECK 4



DECK 5



DECK 6



6. Triple Turrets (sandcasters)
7. Particle Accelerator Spinal Mount
8. Large Missile Bays
9. Medium Meson Gun Bays
10. Small Fusion Gun Bays
11. Plasma Barbettes
12. Docking Spaces
13. Type II Point Defence Batteries

14. Meson Screens
15. Nuclear Dampers
16. Missile Storage
17. Sandcaster Storage
18. Repair Drones
19. Barracks
20. Brigs
21. Armouries
22. Medical Bays
23. UNREP System
24. Workshops
25. Launch Tube
26. Recovery Deck
27. Docking Space
28. Staterooms
29. Low Berths
30. Common Areas
31. Fuel Processor

32. Briefing Rooms
33. Sensors
34. Bridge

DUNEA

Dunea was once home to the Chanestin Kingdom, an interstellar empire conquered by the Imperium in the year 2. The Chanestin worlds were pacified and some occupied for a time before being turned over to self-rule. Even after over 1,100 years of Imperial citizenship, the Chanestin people have clung to their cultural heritage and have found it difficult to assimilate. All eight of the Amber Zones in the subsector have been designated due to the activity of Chanestin separatists. A great deal of unrest has sprung up on these worlds and there is a burgeoning movement to create a Chanestin cultural zone similar to that of the Sylean Worlds. Cultural zones have been afforded to human Minor Races and cultural groups that have found it difficult to fully accept Imperial hegemony. While the Emperor is considering the possibility, he does not want to set a bad precedent. The Imperium wants to emphasise inclusion, not division. If too many groups are granted cultural zones, the Imperium could become a fractious entity, which is the last thing the Emperor wants.

The Emperor must tread a fine line with the Chanestin Crisis. The Imperium has had to put down revolts before and they are unpleasant affairs to say the least. The Chanestins have little in the way of resources to stage a bona fide revolt and everyone knows this. With ultra-high-tech surveillance gear and highly trained counterinsurgency operatives at their disposal, the Imperium has the upper hand. Without the ability to actually make things uncomfortable for the Imperium, it would appear that the Chanestins do not have much of a leg to stand on. However, this is the Core and appearances are important. The Emperor certainly does not want to see a multi-world insurgency occur in his home sector, even one hopelessly doomed to fail. The Moot is divided on the subject. While some are determined that the Imperium must draw a line in the sand and deny the Chanestin request, others believe it to be more expedient to simply give them what they want so that the Core can move on to more pressing matters.

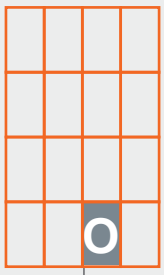
Meanwhile, the Imperium has done what it can to keep the peace. None of the Chanestin worlds are under Imperial military rule but the armed forces do have a presence on most of the systems that they claim. The Imperial Navy 132nd Fleet, headquartered at Uundizi, keeps a watchful eye on the Chanestin worlds and has been quick to respond when there are riots, mass insurrections or terrorist acts. In addition to its role as a link on the x-boat routes, the Scout Service way station at Ginnekar also maintains a small fleet of jump-6 couriers to keep Capital abreast of current events should things go awry.

The coreward portion of Dunea has a moderate-sized stellar gap, which makes for a somewhat challenging passage to the rest of the Core. The worlds in and around this gap have formed strong commercial ties with one another, anchored by the efforts of the Uundizi, Zimmel and Bussirka starports. This trio would very much like to incorporate the Chanestin worlds into what could become a vibrant subsector economy. While the Chanestin buy goods from coreward Dunea, many of them levy 'phantom taxes' on visiting traders. It is against Imperial law to hinder free trade but making things inconvenient by charging exorbitant prices for routine services and fuel and finding other ways to gum up the works are workable methods to hamper the flow of commerce. The Chanestin are playing with fire here since free trade is the law of the Imperium. Should tensions escalate, the Imperial Navy could apply a form of gunship diplomacy by taking over starport operations on the Chanestin worlds and forcing them to play fair. The Imperium sincerely hopes it does not come to that.

KESHI

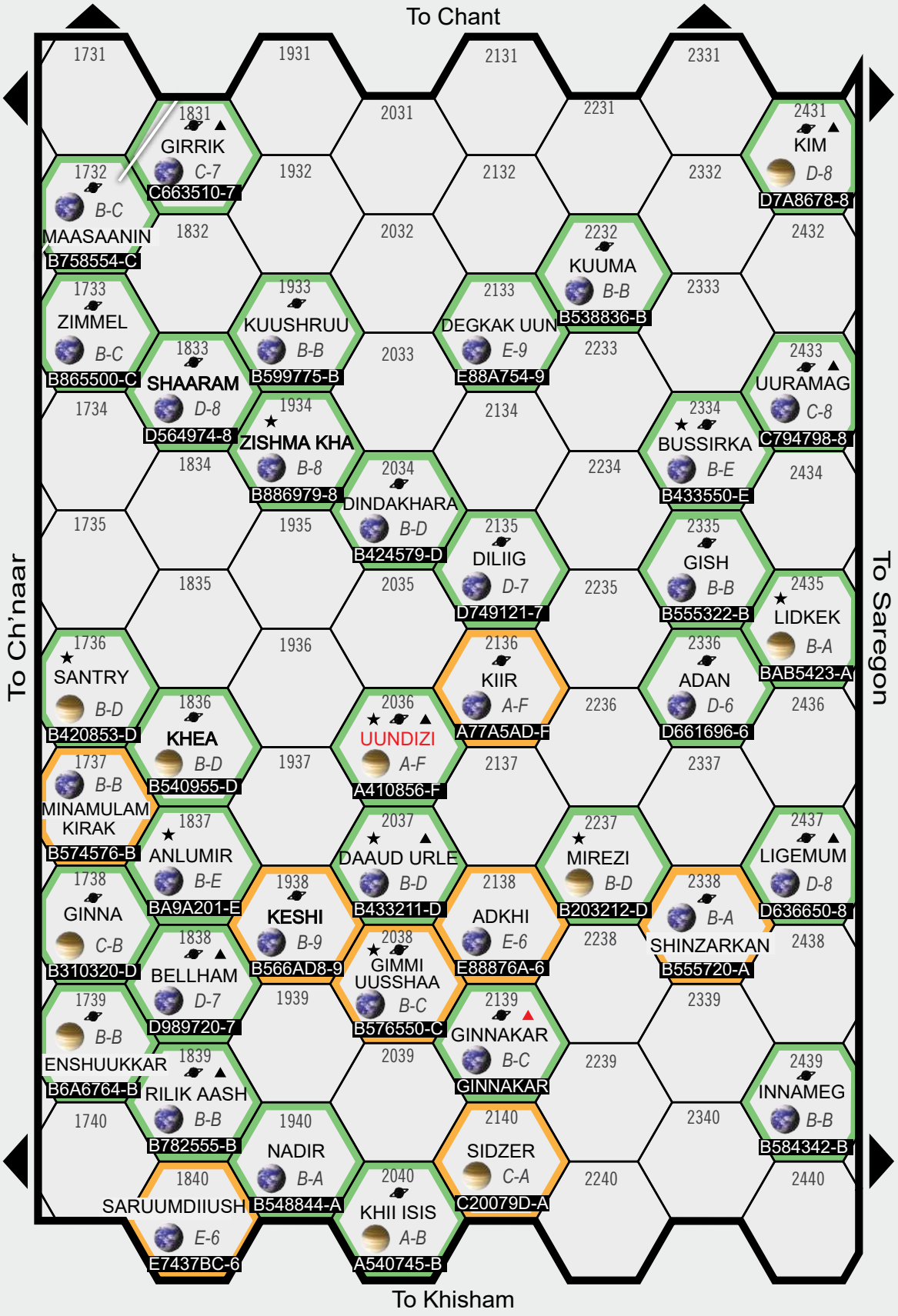
Keshi is the former capital of the Chanestin Kingdom, an empire of 25 star systems that lasted for nearly 1,300 years. The Chanestin Kingdom rebuffed both the Sylean Federation and its successor state, the Third Imperium, and ultimately engaged in a 100-year war with both empires. After losing the war, Keshi became the cultural and spiritual centre of the Chanestin people and took on an unexpected role: antiquities collector. Fearing that their culture would be erased from the pages of history, the disenfranchised Chanestin nobility retrieved paintings, sculptures, manuscripts, archived holovideos and just about any other art forms and records that they could get their hands on from the former worlds of the kingdom. Entire bridges, towers, monuments and other architectural pieces were disassembled and transported to Keshi where they have been reconstructed for the public to marvel at.

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Adan	2336		D661696-6	Ni Ri		G
Adkhi	2138		E88876A-6	Ag Ri	A	
Anlumir	1837	N	BA9A201-E	Ht Lo Wa		
Bellham	1838	S	D989720-7	Ri		G
Bussirka	2334	N	B433550-E	Ht Ni Po		G
Daaud Urle	2037	N S	B433211-D	Ht Lo Po		
Degkak Uun	2133		E88A754-9	Ri Wa		
Diliig	2135		D749121-7	Lo		G
Dindakhara	2034		B424579-D	Ni		G
Enshuukkar	1739		B6A6764-B	Fl		G
Gimmi Uusshaa	2038	N	B576550-C	Ag Ht Ni	A	G
Ginna	1738		C8A6203-B	Fl Lo		G
Ginnakar	2139	W	B565300-C	Ht Lo		G
Girrik	1831	S	C663510-7	Ni		G
Gish	2335		B555322-B	Lo		G
Iidkek	2435	N	BAB5423-A	Fl Ni		
Innameg	2439		B584342-B	Lo		G
Keshi	1938		B566AD8-9	Hi	A	G
Khea	1836		B540955-D	De Hi Ht In Po		G
Khii Isis	2040		A540745-B	De Po		G
Kiir	2136		A77A5AD-F	Ht Ni Wa	A	G
Kim	2431	S	D7A8678-8	Fl Ni		G
Kuuma	2232		B538836-B			G
Kuushruu	1933		B599775-B			G
Ligemum	2437	S	D636650-8	Ni		G
Maasaanin	1732		B758554-C	Ag Ht Ni		G
Minamulam Kirak	1737		B574576-B	Ag Ni	A	
Mirezi	2237	N	B203212-D	Ht Ic Lo Va		
Nadir	1940		B548844-A			
Rilik Aash	1839	S	B782555-B	Ni		G
Santry	1736	N	B420853-D	De Ht Na Po		
Saruumdiiush	1840		E7437BC-6	Po	A	
Shaaram	1833		D564974-8	Hi		G
Shinzarkan	2338		B555720-A	Ag	A	G
Sidzer	2140		C20079D-A	Na Va	A	
Uundizi	2036	N S	A410856-F	Ht Na		G
Uuramag	2433	S	C794798-8	Ag		G
Zimmel	1733		B865500-C	Ag Ga Ht Ni		G
Zishma Kha	1934	N	B886979-8	Ga Hi		



CORE

DUNEA SUBSECTOR



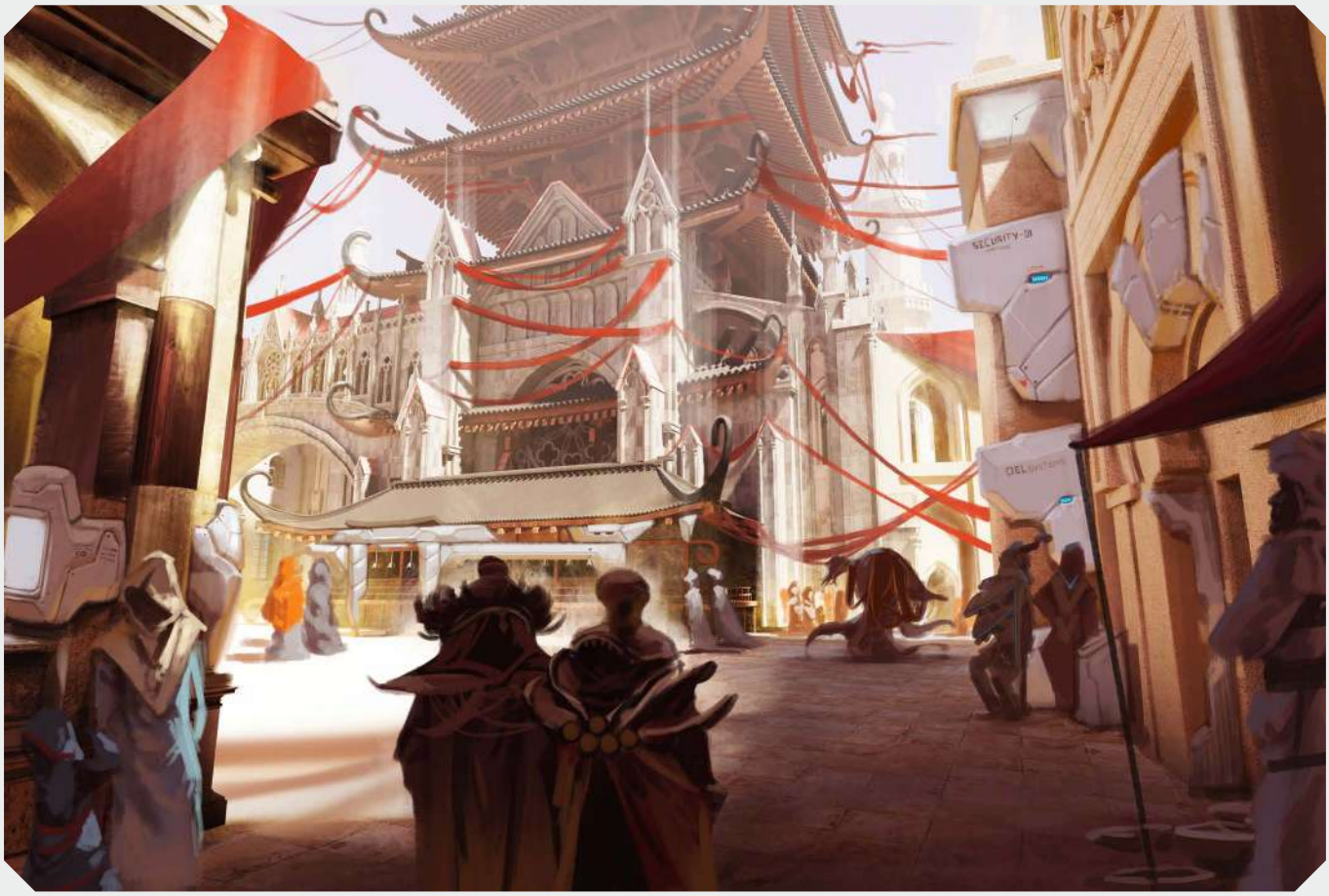
Over the centuries, Keshi amassed such an impressive collection of Chanestin Kingdom memorabilia that the world became a destination for millions upon millions of pilgrims from the other culturally Chanestin worlds. An ancestor and cultural fetish worshipping religion has taken the place of the monarchy that once ruled most of Dunea. The ruling authority on Keshi is a quasi-religious bureaucracy known as the Curators. This shadowy group conceals their identities from the public but professes to redistribute the profits of their enterprises to the people. While Keshians are given a universal basic income, no one except the secretive Curator administration truly knows how much revenue is brought in or how equitably it is distributed.

Keshi has partnered with industrial Khea to capitalise on the pilgrimage and tourism industry, which brings in a large portion of Keshi's total wealth. Part of the appeal of Keshi to the Chanestin people is the world's unwillingness to accept Imperial authority. Keshi and Khea advocate the establishment of a Chanestin Worlds cultural zone and have actively stirred up insurgent groups on many of the kingdom's former worlds to help support their cause.

Those with Chanestin heritage are not the only interested parties. Keshi and other Chanestin worlds are a big tourist draw for foreigners as well. The unique art, architecture and culture appeals to many people from elsewhere in the Core and millions of them make pilgrimages to the region to see the world's wonders.

KHII ISIS

This world has been called many things. During the era of the First Imperium, it was known as Gikhii Iis, roughly translated as 'desolation' or 'dry death', which makes sense considering that its original Vilani colony died out during the Long Night. The world was resettled during the Chanestin era, who maintained the tradition of giving it a Vilani name but subtly changed it to Khii Isis, meaning 'dry home'. There is a movement to change the world's name yet again to Ekal, which comes from the old Terran language of Hindi and means 'solo'. The majority of the world's current inhabitants are the descendants of Terran immigrants who came from the Indian subcontinent.



The Khii Isis binary star system features two nearly identical red dwarves that orbit a common centre of mass. Khii Isis is in a tidally locked orbit around the slightly larger of the two stars but has an unusual day-night cycle due to its occasional proximity to the second star. When its orbit takes it close to the companion star, the normally dark hemisphere of Khii Isis is exposed to dim light, roughly equivalent to early dawn or dusk.

Khii Isis is host to a number of life forms, all of which presumed to have been brought to the world by Vilani colonists. The world itself is unlikely to have developed life independently although there have been no definitive studies that prove this to be the case. While there are no permanent bodies of water on the surface of the planet, Khii Isis has liquid water underground in artesian wells and aquifers, percolating to the surface due to tidal forces from the world's moon and companion star. The world's population expansion over the past few centuries has necessitated the drilling of hundreds of additional wells, co-located with the world's cities, towns and settlements.

After the Chanestin yolk was thrown off, the locals quickly evolved into an egalitarian and democratic society. Cities, towns, villages and even remote settlements are dependent on one another for survival in the harsh, dry climate of the world that has moulded Khii Isis into a society of equals. Elections are held for all government positions twice per year, which enables the people to quickly and easily toss out the old and usher in the new when things are not working. Voting age is 13, by which point the Khii Isisians are educated and well aware of the harsh realities of life on their world. Most citizens are armed and at least reasonably skilled in the use of guns and bladed weapons. The equality-oriented culture of Khii Isis had made its people intolerant of the nobility. While the world is technically under the administration of the Marquis Dauve-Oloi Dubois, he rarely visits Khii Isis, spending the majority of his time at his manor on Nadir or at Capital.

One term of military service is mandatory for all Khii Isisian citizens after which most go into farming or resource extraction. Hardy outdoors-people sometimes become wilderness and safari guides for tourists who come to see the planet's stark and beautiful vistas, and hunt its unusual animals. The most elusive of these creatures is the dunvic, also known as the 'sandlion'. This 100 kilogram four-legged predator resembles a Terran lion in form but is more similar to an armadillo in other regards. The dunvic is a stealthy animal with a carapace that provides camouflage, making it difficult to find, much less sneak up on. Hunters of the creature must take care lest they become the hunted.

Animal	**Hits**	**Speed**
Dunvic	34	8m
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 3, Survival 2	
Attacks	Claws (2D)	
Traits	Armour (+8), Camouflaged, Heightened Senses, Large (+1)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter	

UUNDIZI

The fledgling Third Imperium made Uundizi the focal point of its efforts to pacify and integrate the worlds of the Chanestin Kingdom after defeating them. Uundizi has in many ways become a model Imperial society, having allowed the Chanestin to keep elements of their culture that do not pose a threat to the Imperium. The Uundizians attempted to create an environment in which the Chanestin might pull themselves up by their bootstraps during the era of postwar reconstruction.

Alas, there were those among the Chanestin who wanted no part of the brave new world that the Imperium offered and many emigrated from Uundizi to Keshi or Khea. Imperial citizens were urged to take part in the Uundizi project by coming to the world to help rebuild it and, despite the environmental challenges this posed, the idea had broad appeal. In the early days of Imperial history, many worlds in the Core were still recovering from the Long Night. Chanestin worlds like Uundizi had survived the era largely intact and provided a ready-made infrastructure for colonial development. In addition, Chanestin art and architecture was known throughout the Core for its beauty and intricacy.

Over time, the Chanestin who remained on Uundizi became fully acclimated to Imperial society and there is now no discernible difference between those who were there 1,000 years ago and the Imperial colonists who came after. After 10 centuries, there are very few genetically pure Chanestin, although many proudly delve into their family trees and proclaim native heritage.

Uundizian traders continue to reach out to Keshi, Khea and other Chanestin worlds but even after a millennium there is little enthusiasm to join the Imperium. Uundizi commerce primarily flows to spinward where trade with Ch'naar is strong and to trailing where Uundizi's high-tech wares compete with those of Saregon. Subsector Duke Halaris Olchetomi has been encouraged to invest in trade junkets to the ailing Basilling Cluster in Chant but has seen little in the way of profit there. The duke has a number of estates along the profitable route towards Ch'naar but only grudgingly visits the depressing and wayward Chanestin worlds to rimward.

Both the Imperial Navy and Scout Service have bases on Uundizi, which is indicative of its importance to the region. In addition to berthing the ships of the subsector fleet, the navy base is a bulwark against aggression from the Chanestin worlds. The flagship and its auxiliaries include troop transports should the Imperial Marines be required to keep the peace.

Uundizi orbits Oliphant, an enormous yellow giant star that has just begun its journey along the red giant branch towards an eventual core collapse and type-II supernova explosion. Oliphant is orbited by Rive, a white dwarf companion with an eccentric orbit that takes it dangerously close to the primary every few thousand years, during which time it accretes mass from the swollen yellow giant. This has the potential to result in a type-Ia supernova. Neither of these events is expected to occur for millions of years but astronomers are studying the two stars closely to ensure this remains the case.

ZIMMEL

For reasons unknown, the highly inviting and habitable world of Zimmel was devoid of human life at the dawn of the Third Imperium. Vilani records discovered at Shiishuusdar (now Reference) indicate this world was once called Riid and was the site of a flourishing colony during the era of the Ziru Sirka. It was overlooked by the Terrans as they made a mad dash through the sector during the Interstellar Wars, perhaps noting it on some chart for future settlement. The Third Imperium looked upon the world with envy but resisted the temptation to colonise it due to its proximity to the Chanestin worlds who also had their sights set upon it.

In an overture to the Chanestin, the Imperium granted a charter to the Salo Merchant line to establish a free trade zone on the planet that serves both parties. The Chanestin worlds and the Basilling Cluster of rimward Chant have long been economically depressed. The subsector duke at Uundizi gladly accepted the Salo proposal in the hopes it might serve the dual purpose of reviving Chant and drawing the reluctant Chanestin into the Imperial fold.

Zimmel has no government or law to speak of as Salo is built upon principles they call egalitarian individualist anarchy. It is libertarian in economic spirit but culturally driven toward fair and equitable distribution of wealth. While the two concepts are seemingly opposed, Salo makes it work by using technology to ensure that the lower classes are always provided for. The system seems to work even if it causes some grousing among the merchant class who sometimes let slip feelings that it is they who provide the wealth and therefore they who should reap all benefits. Since business is booming, there is plenty of wealth to go around and such grumbling is mostly swept under the rug. However, should Salo see a slowdown at some point, there is concern that the entire system could break down.

To ensure the continued viability of the experiment, Salo has linked their operation to the vibrant economy of Ch'naar. A few decades ago, Salo purchased Gandar, the largest moon of the neighbouring system's only gas giant. Salo upgraded Gandar's starport, invested in a fleet of automated gas giant-skimming drones and converted the port into a refuelling station for traders who make their way to and from Ch'naar. While the move has significantly enhanced their fortunes, Gandarians have not entirely taken to the egalitarian anarchy concept and broken ranks with their parent world. Gandar has more of a freewheeling frontier culture and without some degree of law and order, social structure tends to break down.

THE SALO LOGO

The logo of Salo merchant lines is one small orange star and two large stars, one red and one orange, representing the stars of Zimmel, Gandar and Shaaram. Orange bars connect the stars to each other. Salo is a multi-subsector line with its foot in both Dunea and Ch'naar. While its logo is intended to express the corporation's desire to unite the two subsectors, there is little evidence that either side embraces the notion. Dunea is largely a refuge for the Chanestin worlds and Ch'naar is under the direction of the decidedly anti-Chanestin Aursisians. The two sides often scoff at the blind idealism that the logo represents but Salo has stuck with it thus far.

SAREGON

Saregon is the Core's most populated subsector with 286 billion sophonts living on 39 worlds. It has nine high-population worlds, four of which are industrial. Saregon is one of the most powerful subsectors in the Core, second only to Kaskii when it comes to industrial might. With its rich and growing economy, vibrant jump-1 main and powerful subsector navy, Saregon is in many ways the Imperial dream. In others, it is a dystopian nightmare.

Saregon has more than its share of police states and technologically enforced authoritarian regimes. There are eight worlds with Law Levels A+, all of which use and abuse surveillance technology to watch their people's every move. The draconian states on Dishadshii, Igla, Milpa and Dinad take the concept to another level; citizens are fitted with tracking devices at birth and forcibly implanted with wafer jacks, neural comms and neural links during adolescence. These devices are used to brainwash them and ensure absolute compliance with the dictates of those in power.

For its part, the world of Saregon is attempting to show these dictators there is another way. Saregonian technologists have leveraged the power of artificial intelligence to create what amounts to a post-scarcity anarchist utopia. The Imperial Navy has gotten into the act as well on worlds like Arla and Iimdii where military rule is giving way to low Law Level societies. After the chaotic collapse of an authoritarian government on Khuir, the Scout Service and Imperial Army restored order and are experimenting with a minimalist legal system that has yielded good results. Unfortunately, these attempts to lead by example have not swayed most dictators in the subsector, many of whom contend that without extreme laws, their societies would descend into chaos.

Another overriding theme of Saregon is the ongoing battle between megacorporation Tukera Lines and sector-wide corporation Achenaar Antilles. Tukera, which has major holdings in Delphi, has made inroads in the lower third of the subsector by using their industrial might to undercut Achenaar Antilles. The two lines have each accused the other of sabotage, commerce raiding and other skulduggery. Both have hired mercenary companies to secure their starships and industrial facilities. While some of the more outlandish claims made by the two corporations have been dismissed by the subsector duke, he has instructed the Imperial Navy to keep a close eye on events to ensure they do not boil over into a full-blown mercantile conflict.

The Imperial Navy's 273rd Fleet has its hands full in Saregon, patrolling the Core's borders, defending trade routes, quelling problems on its nine Amber Zone worlds, ensuring corporate conflicts do not escalate into something more and keeping a watchful eye on the Chanestin worlds on Saregon's spinward flank. The 273rd has 10 full squadrons at its disposal and has appointed highly regarded officers from the Admiralty to command them. Saregon has an aggressive, individualistic and rather unruly subsector culture. While the Imperium is careful not to play too heavy a hand, they have deployed the squadrons of the 273rd Colonial Fleet in an advisory role to many planetary navies. They must tread a fine line so as not to intrude upon the affairs of individual star systems but the general feeling is that more uniformity might mitigate some of the chaos.

LIGHT CRUISER

CLASS: STARBURST OF EXTREME HEROISM

The *Starburst of Extreme Heroism*-class, or *SEH*-class for short, is a common sight throughout Imperial space and may be found serving in many of the empire's numbered fleets. It is essentially a more rounded and streamlined version of the larger *Ghalalk*-class cruiser. The form factor of the two ships is basically the same with less space for bays and other accoutrements on the *SEH*.

TL15		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	30,000 tons, Streamlined	—	1800
	Radiation Shielding	—	750
	Reinforced	—	900
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 8	1,920	1728
M-Drive	Thrust 6	1,800	3600
J-Drive	Jump 4	3,005	4507.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 38,800	1,940	3880
Fuel Tanks	J-4 x2, 8 weeks of operation	12,388	—
Bridge	Holographic Display	60	187.5
Computer	Core/100	—	130
	Core/90 (backup)	—	120
Sensors	Advanced	5	5.3
	Distributed Arrays	10	10.6
	Enhanced Signal Processing	2	8
	Military Countermeasures	15	28
Weapons	Meson Spinal Mount (TL15)	6,000	2600
	Fusion Barbettes (long range) x5	25	25
	Triple Turrets (long range beam lasers) x50	50	143.75
	Triple Turrets (missile racks) x150	150	487.5
	Triple Turrets (sandcasters) x10	10	17.5
	Small Tractor Beam Bays (energy inefficient) x3	150	210
Screens	Nuclear Dampers x10	100	100
Ammunition	Missile Storage (3,600 missiles)	300	—
	Sandcaster Storage (400 barrels)	20	—
Systems	Fuel Processor (5,000 tons/day)	250	12.5
	Fuel Scoops	—	—
	Armouries x19	19	4.75
	Barracks x30	60	3
	Briefing Rooms x2	8	1
	Brig	4	0.25
	Medical Bays x3	12	6
	Repair Drones	300	60
	UNREP System (100 tons/hour)	5	2.5
	Workshops x10	60	9

Crew

Captain, Pilots x3, Astrogator, Engineers x65, Gunners x 172, Maintenance x20, Medics x3, Marines x 30, Officers x27, Administrators x10

Hull: 16,500

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

MCr1.813632/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr21764.335

Power Requirements

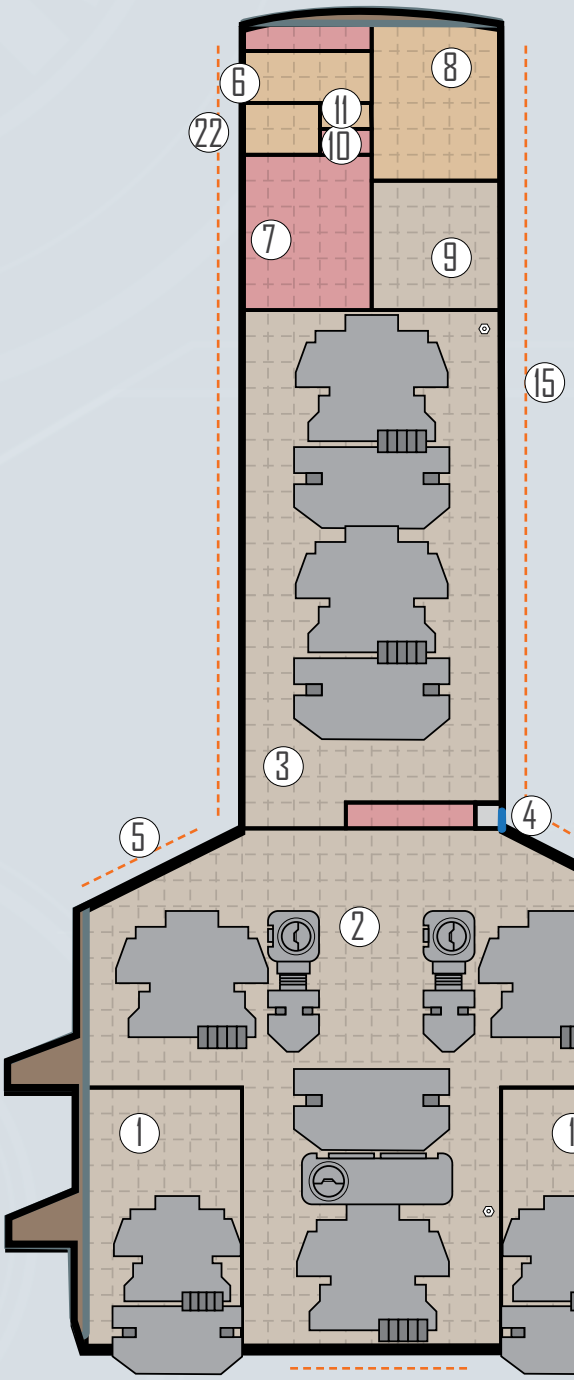
Basic Ship Systems	60,000
Manoeuvre Drive	18,000
Jump Drive	12,000
Sensors	16
Weapons	2,344
Fuel Processor	250

TL15		TONS	COST (MCR)
Craft	Docking Space (254 tons)	280	70
	Modular Cutters x5	—	51.435
	Air/raft	—	0.25
Staterooms	Standard x171	684	85.5
	High	6	0.8
	Emergency Low Berths x84	84	84
	Low Berths x20	10	1
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Advanced Fire Control/2	—	15
	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Auto-Repair/2	—	10
	Battle System/2	—	24
	Broad Spectrum EW	—	14
	Electronic Warfare/1	—	15
	Launch Solution/3	—	16
	Point Defence/2	—	12
Common Areas		172	17.2
Cargo		97	—

STARBURST OF EXTREME HEROISM-CLASS LIGHT CRUISER

STARBURST OF EXTREME HEROISM-CLASS LIGHT CRUISER

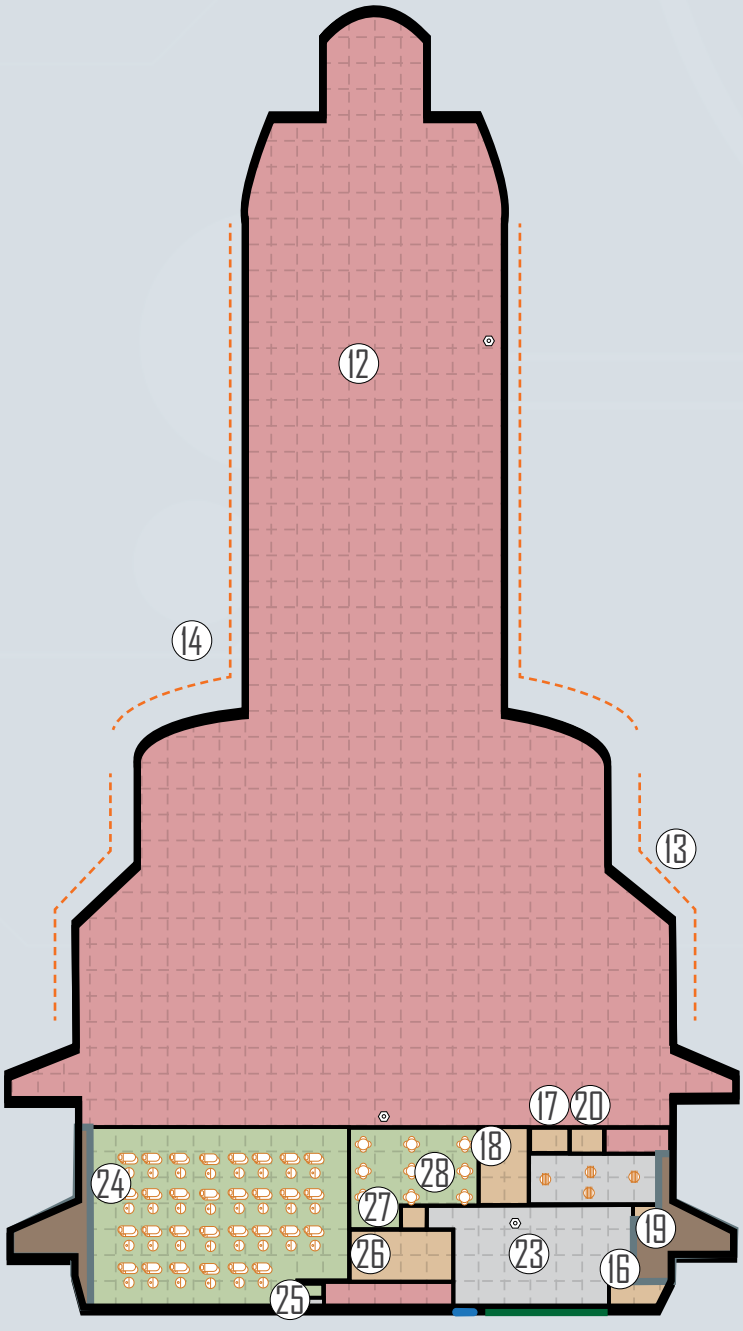
DECK 1 – FUEL DECK



1. M–Drive
2. J–Drive
3. Power Plant
4. Airlocks
5. Triple Turrets (sandcasters)
6. Nuclear Dampers
7. Missile Storage
8. Repair Drones
9. Fuel Processor
10. Sandcaster Storage
11. Military Countermeasures

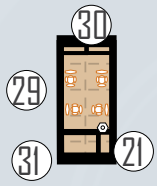
DECK 2

STARBURST OF EXTREME HEROISM-CLASS LIGHT CRUISER



DECK 3

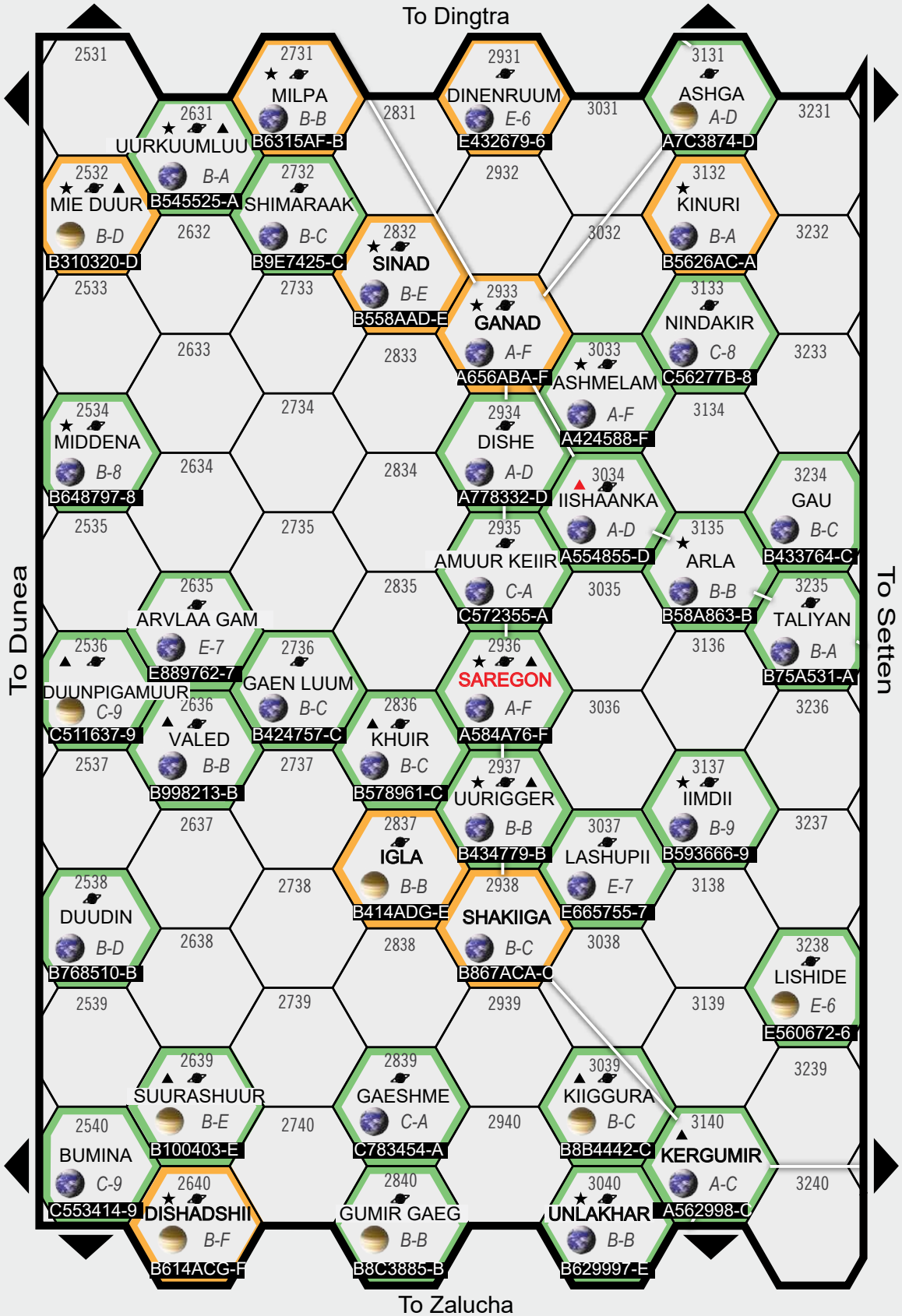
12. Meson Spinal Mount
13. Triple Turrets
(long range beam lasers)
14. Triple Turrets (missile racks)
15. Triple Turrets (sandcasters)
16. Armouries
17. Barracks
18. Briefing Rooms
19. Brig
20. Medical Bays
21. UNREP System
22. Workshops
23. Docking Space
24. Staterooms
25. High Staterooms
26. Emergency Low Berths
27. Low Berths
28. Common Areas
29. Bridge
30. Sensors
31. Distributed Arrays



DECK 4

1 SQUARE = 10 TONS

Name	Location	Bases	Statistics	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
Amuur Keiir	2935		C572355-A	Lo		G
Arla	3135	N	B58A863-B	Ri Wa		
Arvlaa Gam	2635		E889762-7	Ri		G
Ashga	3131		A7C3874-D	Fl Ht		G
Ashmelam	3033	N	A424588-F	Ht Ni		G
Bumina	2540		C553414-9	Ni Po		
Dinenruum	2931		E432679-6	Na Ni Po	A	G
Dishadshii	2640	N	B614ACG-F	Hi Ht Ic In	A	G
Dishe	2934		A778332-D	Ht Lo		G
Duudin	2538		B768510-B	Ag Ni		G
Duunpigamuur	2536	S	C511637-9	Ic Na Ni		G
Gaen Luum	2736		B424757-C	Ht		G
Gaeshme	2839		C783454-A	Ni		G
Ganad	2933	N	A656ABA-F	Ga Hi Ht	A	G
Gau	3234		B433764-C	Ht Na Po		
Gumir Gaeg	2840		B8C3885-B	Fl		G
Igla	2837		B414ADG-E	Hi Ht Ic In	A	G
Iimdii	3137	N	B593666-9	Ni		G
Iishaanka	3034	W	A554855-D	Ht		G
Kergumir	3140	S	A562998-C	Hi Ht		
Khuir	2836	S	B578961-C	Hi Ht In		G
Kiiggura	3039	S	B8B4442-C	Fl Ni		G
Kinuri	3132	N	B5626AC-A	Ht Ni Ri	A	
Lashupii	3037		E665755-7	Ag Ga Ri		G
Lishide	3238		E560672-6	De Ni Ri		G
Middena	2534	N	B648797-8	Ag		G
Mie Duur	2532	N S	B310320-D	Ht Lo	A	G
Milpa	2731	N	B6315AF-B	Ni Po	A	G
Nindakir	3133		C56277B-8	Ri		G
Saregon	2936	N S	A584A76-F	Ga Hi Ht		G
Shakiiga	2938		B867ACA-C	Hi Ht	A	
Shimaraak	2732		B9E7425-C	Ht Ni		G
Sinad	2832	N	B558AAD-E	Hi Ht	A	G
Suurashuur	2639	S	B100403-E	Ht Ni Va		G
Taliyan	3235		B75A531-A	Ni Wa		G
Unlakhar	3040	N	B629997-E	Hi Ht In		G
Uurigger	2937	N S	B434779-B			G
Uurkuumluu	2631	N S	B545525-A	Ag Ni		G
Valed	2636	S	B998213-B	Lo		G


To Dingtra
To Dunea
To Setten
To Zalucha
2531
2731
MILPA
B-B
B6315AF-B
2931
DINENRUUM
E-6
E432679-6
3131
ASHGA
A-D
A7C3874-D
2631
UURKUUMLUU
B-A
B545525-A
2831
3031
3231
2532
MIE DUUR
B-D
B310320-D
2732
SHIMARAAK
B-C
B9E7425-C
2932
3132
KINURI
B-A
B5626AC-A
2632
2832
SINAD
B-E
B558AAD-E
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3232
2533
2733
2933
GANAD
A-F
A656ABA-F
3133
NINDAKIR
C-8
C56277B-8
2633
2833
3033
ASHMELAM
A-F
A424588-F
3233
2534
MIDDENA
B-8
B648797-8
2734
2934
DISHE
A-D
A778332-D
3134
2634
2834
3034
IISHAANKA
A-D
A554855-D
3234
GAU
B-C
B433764-C
2535
2735
2935
AMUUR KEIIR
C-A
C572355-A
3135
ARLA
B-B
B58A863-B
2635
ARVLAA GAM
E-7
E889762-7
2835
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3235
TALIYAN
B-A
B75A531-A
2536
DUUNPIGAMUUR
C-9
C511637-9
2736
GAEN LUUM
B-C
B424757-C
2936
SAREGON
A-F
A584A76-F
3136
2636
VALED
B-B
B998213-B
2836
KHUIR
B-C
B578961-C
3036
3236
2537
2737
2937
UURIGGER
B-B
B434779-B
3137
IIMDII
B-9
B593666-9
2637
2837
IGLA
B-B
B414ADG-E
3037
LASHUPII
E-7
E665755-7
3237
2538
DUUDIN
B-D
B768510-B
2738
2938
SHAKIIGA
B-C
B867ACA-C
3138
2638
2838
3038
3238
LISHIDE
E-6
E560672-6
2539
2739
2939
3139
2639
SUURASHUUR
B-E
B100403-E
2839
GAESHME
C-A
C783454-A
3039
KIIGGURA
B-C
B8B4442-C
3239
2540
BUMINA
C-9
C553414-9
2740
2940
3140
KERGUMIR
A-C
A562998-C
2640
DISHADSHII
B-F
B614ACG-F
2840
GUMIR GAEG
B-B
B8C3885-B
3040
UNLAKHAR
B-B
B629997-E
3240
Gas Giant
B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
★ Imperial Naval Base
▲ Imperial Scout Base
Secure System
Amber Zone
X-boat Route
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)
▲ Scout Way Station

DINENRUUM

Dinenruum is a Trojan planet, perched in the L4 Lagrange point of the system's orange subgiant primary and the larger of its two red dwarf companions. The rarity of this phenomenon makes Dinenruum a natural wonder of Charted Space.

A few decades ago, the planet was the site of a large and growing colony and ground had just been broken on Research Station Delta when catastrophe struck. The tertiary red dwarf star in the system has an eccentric orbit that brings it close to the other two stars every few centuries. It erupted with a two-day long series of stellar flares that lashed the colony with radiation. Hundreds of thousands were killed instantly and many thousands more died a slow and horrific death from absorbing such a high dose of radiation. The research station, a more modern structure with proper radiation shielding, was nearly complete but soon abandoned without the infrastructure to support it.

The remaining population are mostly transient corporate workers on Dinenruum to extract mineral resources. The system's two planetoid belts are reasonably rich and have a decently sized belter community. The University of Ashga is attempting to raise funds to restore the research station so that local studies of the rare Trojan planet may resume.

IGLA

Igla is governed by the Church of Preservation, which emphasises that all resources are finite and restrictions on the use of technology are necessary for all of its citizens. The beliefs of the church stem from the Long Night when the collapse of the Rule of Man and subsequent disintegration of interstellar trade resulted in the degradation of technological equipment, which had severe effects for those living in hostile environments, such as that of Igla. The church preaches that objects of technology are a gift from God and worthy of worship in their own right. Adherents to the religion – including all native-born Iglans by church decree – thank God for the continued operation of their technological devices with daily prayers.

Iglan society has multiple castes, each of which has access to different levels of technology. The lowest caste is only given access to facilities and equipment of approximately TL7. The church uses surveillance technology to monitor how 'devout' its citizens are and grants access to ever-greater levels of technology to those who show sufficient levels of 'enlightenment' with TL14 restricted to the priesthood and the Order of Fusion, the armed and armoured guardians of Igla. The order pledges fealty to the Imperial Army and are known for their discipline, selflessness and overzealous maintenance practices. Their frugality, effectiveness and efficient use of technology has made them a model

for other Imperial Army units in the subsector. Cadre battalions are sent to other systems to teach others how to achieve similar results. The order uses these missions to evangelise the teachings of the church and recruit parishioners with mixed results. Authoritarian systems, those with Law Level A+, have been receptive to their teachings. However, most high Law Level systems have their own stringent rules and regulations and sometimes bristle at the notion that their armies are being taught new ways of thinking. This can cause friction but cadres are usually allowed to continue with their instruction. After all, most military budgets are constrained and proven methods to reduce expenses must always be given a long, hard look.

SAREGON

The Anarque of Saregon is a powerful computer network that manages the lives of the planet's 10 billion inhabitants. All of their basic needs are provided by automated and sustainable systems so the motivation to work is limited. In order to provide for everyone, the Anarque needs a constant influx of raw materials and natural resources. With a habitable mainworld, four gas giants, dozens of gas giant moons and a rich planetoid belt, Saregon might be the ideal world for just such an experiment. The Imperium is highly suspicious of unconstrained artificial intelligence, which has put the Saregonians under the watchful eye of Imperial authorities but Saregonian culture is open and allows the Imperium to probe and analyse the system as much as they like.

The Anarque subdivides the world's inhabitants according to needs, so provincial borders vary from day-to-day even if the location of residents does not. Most Saregonians do not engage in work as most understand the concept. However, the system makes sure to keep the citizens busy with one task or another, some of which are industrious and some more artistic or social in nature. All citizens are outfitted with wafer jacks into which they plug software they need to perform their assigned tasks. The end result is a culture that seems to be terribly busy, flitting from place-to-place, engaged in one activity or another but little of which appears to be absolutely necessary. Some have joked that the Saregonians are on a life-long scavenger hunt forced upon them by its ruling computer system.

The world's opportune location on a sizable jump-1 main has made it rich from trade, the bounties of which are shared among its populace. Wealth is not shared equally but according to need and relatively few Saregonians argue with the outcome. Those who are dissatisfied are encouraged to seek their way elsewhere and willingly granted exit visas to any of the other systems in the subsector.

Population is strictly controlled by the Anarque but this is done subtly so as not to convey the feeling that one lacks self-determination. Should one province or another exceed its quota of citizens, sonic inhibitors in the arcologies impede further conception until the numbers balance out again. Critics of these techniques have called them 'soft eugenics' but most Saregonians just see it as the Anarque being practical. Neighbouring systems such as Sinad, Ganad, Igla and Shakiiga have runaway population crises that result in an endless cycle of overcrowding and overdevelopment, and all of which require authoritarian governments to keep them from slipping into chaos. Saregon has averted such problems by turning over the decision making to an advanced computer system without overtly curtailing individual freedoms.

SHIMARAAK

Shimaraak is the homeworld of the Ssienjhiovla, a species of mollusc-like omnivorous sophonts, which had developed to approximately TL3 when discovered by the Ziru Sirka thousands of years ago. The Ssienjhiovla evolved from a strictly aquatic to an amphibious species at some point in their evolutionary development. Shimaraak has a remarkably old and stable yellow main sequence star, so catastrophic stellar flares are an unlikely culprit to have brought about the mutation. In addition to the Ssienjhiovla, the world has a bountiful and varied ecosphere.

Shimaraak is a large, high-gravity world with a thin, low atmosphere. The world has few mountain ranges of note but its shallow oceans are rich in high-grade metals and rare-earth minerals. The industrial worlds of Saregon are eager to get their hands on these untapped resources but the Scout Service has acquired a proclamation from the Emperor that denies them access. The scouts would like to interdict the system but the highly social Ssienjhiovla have requested that they refrain from such extreme measures. The Ssienjhiovla have acquired and adapted to Imperial technology and very much want to continue being participating citizens of the Imperium. Slapping an Amber or Red Zone on the world would segregate them from the interstellar community, which is the last thing the Ssienjhiovla want. While there is no scout base on Shimaraak, the scouts visit often and vigilantly watch over the world.

CREATING SSIENJHIOVLA TRAVELLERS

The Ssienjhiovla are shelled, mollusc-like species that are highly adapted to the conditions of their homeworld. The atmosphere is thin and low with high gravity, which resulted in the development of no avian species and enabled many unique evolutionary paths to occur. The Ssienjhiovla have smooth, moist skin on their legs that gradually becomes drier and more porous higher on the trunk. They have two squat, dextrous feet that require constant moisturisation lest they become chapped and cracked, causing great discomfort. The feet have numerous suckers that enable them to firmly grip just about any surface when shoes are not worn. It is very difficult to move a Ssienjhiovla that has anchored itself with its foot suckers. Their upper bodies have four arm-like appendages, each of which ends in a malleable, six-fingered hand. Any of their digits can be made opposable to the others, giving the Ssienjhiovla heightened dexterity. They do not have a head; instead, their brain and sensory organs are located towards the centre of the trunk.

Ssienjhiovla do not hear well by human standards. The thin atmosphere of their homeworld does not permit the easy propagation of sound but they do have exceptional senses of sight and smell. Their primary mode of communication is the excretion of various gases and pheromones from their porous upper bodies. Their olfactory senses can pick out a large array of smells simultaneously from a range of up to five kilometres. Reading a composite of emitted smells from their brethren and other natural odours gives them an almost clairvoyant sixth sense. When in visual range, the Ssienjhiovla also communicate by gesticulating with their arms and fingers to convey complex thoughts and feelings to one another. Devices similar to those used by the Hivers have been created, which enable the Ssienjhiovla to communicate audibly with humans.

The Ssienjhiovla are asexual and temporarily develop male and female parts in order to reproduce. An individual Ssienjhiovla may therefore become both male and female several times over the course of its life. They bear live and motile young who are almost immediately independent. The young grow up among the adult community and are treated like pets until they come of age, at which point they become peers.

The Ssienjhiovla have a dorsal carapace that provides strong natural protection. Most Ssienjhiovla decorate their carapaces by using naturally occurring acids from Shimaraak to burn away small portions at the edges in order to produce what they believe to be an aesthetically pleasing look.

Relatively few Ssienjhiovla leave their homeworld but among those who do, the most popular career choices are the Scout Service, Imperial Navy or their own planetary navy. They must wear special clothing, vacc suits and armour to help them endure the drier conditions and reduced gravity of human starships.

CHARACTERISTICS

Ssienjhiovla Travellers have the following modifiers applied to their characteristics: STR-2, DEX+1.

TRAITS

Ssienjhiovla Travellers have the following traits:

Carapace: The Ssienjhiovla carapace gives them natural Protection +6.

Composite Imaging: On worlds with Atmosphere 3–7, the Ssienjhiovla can use their senses to create a detailed composite image of events that occur out of visual range at a distance of up to one kilometre provided that they occur within the same environment, similar to the psionic Clairvoyance talent. This ability does not work with events that occur within a sealed environment such as a starship or behind a vault or airlock door.

Non-verbal Communication: Ssienjhiovla can communicate with one another over a distance of up to five kilometres without the benefit of a radio or other device using their pheromone excretion abilities and heightened sense of smell.

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